



# GUARDMOUNT

VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION

*"We Take Care of Our Own"*



*Welcome Home to the VSPA ~ We Take Care of Our Own*

*2008, Volume 13, Issue #1*



The Vietnam Security Police Association passing in review during the parade to celebrate Veteran's Day 2007 and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Wall. Photo taken by VSPA Photographer Lou Reda (Phan Rang 68-69) on Constitution Avenue, Washington D.C.



Kelly Bateman with K-9 Rio, Bill Cummings, Gold Star Mom Helen Lehman, Steve Gattis, Jerry Nelson and Pete Villarreal at The Wall. Photo by VSPA Photographer Ken Neal.

## OFFICERS AND APPOINTED STAFF MEMBERS FOR 2007/2008

All officers and staff are unpaid members of the Vietnam Security Police Association who volunteered to serve their brothers in the association. Officers were elected in 2006 for a two-year term. Staff members were appointed to assist and advise the officers of the association. The next elections will be held at our reunion in Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 15-19, 2008.

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| President      | Steve Gattis, Cam Ranh Bay 68 – 69, <a href="mailto:SGattis-LM49@vspa.com">SGattis-LM49@vspa.com</a> 254-898-2647 |
| Vice President | Hector Ramos, Binh Thuy 69 – 70, <a href="mailto:hramos926@comcast.net">hramos926@comcast.net</a> 973-430-1577    |
| Secretary      | Bruce Hadley, Bien Hoa 61 - 62, <a href="mailto:brunole@juno.com">brunole@juno.com</a> 718-896-1954               |
| Treasurer      | Den Cook, Tan Son Nhut 67 - 68 <a href="mailto:vspa_treas@netzero.com">vspa_treas@netzero.com</a> 717-368-0124    |
| Historian      | Kelly Bateman, Ubon K-9 70 - 71 <a href="mailto:texask-9@swbell.net">texask-9@swbell.net</a> 512-847-9805         |

### APPOINTED STAFF MEMBERS

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| BX Sales Manager  | Van Digby, Phan Rang 67 - 68 <a href="mailto:VAD403@sbcglobal.net">VAD403@sbcglobal.net</a> 989-686-3639<br>Van is assisted by his wife Joyce and their daughter Kari.                  |
| Chaplain          | Steve Janke, Cam Ranh Bay K-9 69 -70, <a href="mailto:Jank953208@aol.com">Jank953208@aol.com</a> 201-507-9038   |
| Chaplain          | Jim Stastny, Korat K-9 70 – 71, <a href="mailto:jimstastny@verizon.net">jimstastny@verizon.net</a> 301-482-2659   |
| Chaplain          | Bill Cooley, Cam Ranh Bay K-9 71-72, <a href="mailto:BCAJ@gvtc.com">BCAJ@gvtc.com</a> 830-899-7542  |
| Chaplain          | Jeff Kerkhoff, Tan Son Nhut 72 -73, 626-338-6846  |
| Guardmount        | Larry Ernsting, Phan Rang-Safeside, Pleiku, Tuy Hoa, 68 - 70,<br><a href="mailto:ss821csps@netscape.net">ss821csps@netscape.net</a> 785-632-5310  |
| K-9 Kennel Master | Bill Cummings, U-Tapao, K-9 70 - 71, <a href="mailto:usafbrutus@comcast.net">usafbrutus@comcast.net</a> 240-925-1892  |
| Membership        | Phil Carroll, Takhli and NKP K-9 70 -71, <a href="mailto:K9nightfighter@msn.com">K9nightfighter@msn.com</a> 503-975-8608  |
| Membership Asst.  | Janet Wise Affiliate Member, daughter of Life Member Al Matthews<br><a href="mailto:Jwise11956@aol.com">Jwise11956@aol.com</a>  |
| Photographer      | Tony Morris, Cam Ranh Bay 69 - 70, <a href="mailto:htmorris@gmail.com">htmorris@gmail.com</a> 219-322-4418  |
| Photographer      | Steve Hall, Binh Thuy 68 - 69, <a href="mailto:hallstudio@worldnet.att.net">hallstudio@worldnet.att.net</a> 714-634-1132  |
| Photographer      | Lou Reda, Phan Ranh 68-69, <a href="mailto:loureda202@gmail.com">loureda202@gmail.com</a> 419-668-7579  |
| Safeside Liaison  | Pete Villarreal, Phan Rang, Bien Hoa-Safeside 68 - 69, NKP 73 -74<br><a href="mailto:villa@santanet.org">villa@santanet.org</a> 907-388-6942 Vice President of the Safeside Association |
| Sergeant-at-Arms  | Keith Young, Binh Thuy & Phu Cat 70 - 71, <a href="mailto:kcy9540@aol.com">kcy9540@aol.com</a> 716-549-0715   |
| Service Officer   | Bud Owens, Binh Thuy 66 - 67, <a href="mailto:betbudowe@comcast.net">betbudowe@comcast.net</a> 603-778-1990   |

### VSPA WEB SITE:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Web Master       | Don Poss, Da Nang K-9 65 - 66, <a href="mailto:DonPoss-LM37@vspa.com">DonPoss-LM37@vspa.com</a>   |
| K-9 Web Master   | Monty Moore, Da Nang and Phu Cat 68 - 70 K-9, <a href="mailto:K-9@vspa.com">K-9@vspa.com</a>  |
| Bulletin Board   | Bill Marshall, Phu Cat 68 - 69, <a href="mailto:billmarshallsaceliteguard@gmail.com">billmarshallsaceliteguard@gmail.com</a>                            |
| Flight Chief     | 949-361-1770 Bill is also the President of the SAC Elite Guard Association  |
| QRT Flight Chief | Gary Jones, Udorn 65-66, Phan Rang-Safeside 68-69, Tan Son Nhut 71-72,<br><a href="mailto:GaryandJJ@hotmail.com">GaryandJJ@hotmail.com</a> 843-851-7427 |

*Over 1,200 members! 520 Life Members!*  
*This edition of Guardmount is available on our web site at [www.vspa.com](http://www.vspa.com)*

## A TRIBUTE TO OUR ELECTED OFFICERS AND APPOINTED STAFF MEMBERS BY KIM BAYES

### FREELY THEY GIVE

Time and effort, freely they give,  
Preserving the past, for those who live.  
Honoring the memory of their fallen brothers  
Constantly reaching out, to help the others.

They work long hours, staying up late,  
Making sure that it all stays straight.  
Their passion drives them to see it through,  
Never seeking glory or even a 'thank you'.

What Vietnam didn't take, Father time will,  
Making it essential, we appreciate their skills.  
They protect the memories like a precious stone,  
Affirming the motto "We take care of our own."

Kimberly Sue Bayes

## GUARDMOUNT

This issue of Guardmount is our second on-line issue in color. The web site also has black and white scanned copies of all previous issues of Guardmount. Due to the expense of printing and mailing, this issue will be mailed in black and white to those who do not have a computer.

Guardmount is a combined effort among a lot of people, including our members who submit articles, photographs and stories for publication. We hope that you will enjoy this issue. We also apologize for yet another delay in publishing Guardmount. I had to deal with some very serious family medical issues and Larry Ernsting experienced more than anyone should ever have to endure with knee replacement surgery, hail that destroyed two of his cars, and a tornado that destroyed his place of work at the print shop for Kansas State University. ~ Steve Gattis

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Steve Gattis

As our reunion in Albuquerque approaches, I have been thinking about the past six years I have served as your president and the three years before that as Vice President. The years have been wonderful, with great memories and very very busy with thousands of emails and phone calls. I will always remember the calls from guys who had just discovered the VSPA and were excited to know that there were other skycops who had an association just for them, a brotherhood based upon the shield we wore and our service in Vietnam and Thailand, a place where they would never have to explain what they did or who they were; WE KNEW. Some guys cried, others couldn't stop talking as they wondered about finding old buddies. For some, it was the first time they had ever talked about what happened to them while they were on post, about TET or of saying

*1,254 members! 520 Life Members!*

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goodbye to their K-9 partner. Others couldn't remember names of friends, but when I read some names, they started to shout, "I knew him, he was in my hooch." It was always a pleasure to read names of members who had served at the same base. So many good memories based upon my contact with all of you. Thank you!

Reunion planning led to some extraordinary friendships with active duty troops and very humbling moments when they thanked me for all that the VSPA had done for them, for all that we as their ancestors had done for them so many years ago. Yes, they knew about the hard lessons we learned in Vietnam and Thailand. More than once I was brought to tears by their very frank statements about serving in Iraq and saying, "Without you and all that you guys did so long ago, there would be no us. Everything we have, from training to equipment, is because of what you did not have and the hard lessons learned that you have shared with us." At the time, some of those young men and women had been to Iraq four or five times! Now, some of them are on their eighth tour.

The greatest moments I have experienced in the VSPA have been at our reunions when old buddies see each other for the first time in over 30 or 40 years. I will never forget my first reunion (1998) when I found my old hooch mates from Cam Ranh Bay, Brian Thorne and Mike Daoust, who was the VSPA President. They were in the Hospitality Room with our Sector Sergeant, Glenn Wilson, and another buddy from the Training Section, Gary Linebaugh. I couldn't believe how wonderful it was to see all of them again and know that when we said goodbye, it was not forever; it was not that helpless feeling we had leaving Vietnam or Thailand knowing that you would probably never see your best friends again.

I will never forget the courage and strength of Mike Daoust and Rex Hare who were terminally ill with Agent Orange related cancer and gave everything they had to be at one more reunion with their buddies. Nor will I ever forget the pride that we felt as 400 of us marched down Constitution Avenue in a formation six lanes wide and 50 yards deep, protected by K-9 on our perimeter. With a guidon flying for every squadron we had in Vietnam and Thailand, along with the best color guard in the parade, it was an honor for us to march in remembrance of our 111 Air Policemen, Security Policemen and augmentees who did not survive Vietnam and Thailand. We were told by the parade organizers, the Vietnam Veterans of America and two Medal of Honor recipients that our unit was the biggest and best in the parade.

My words do not do justice to the overwhelming feelings that we shared at Arlington Cemetery when we were suddenly surrounded by 319 students who began clapping and saying in their own special way, "Thank you. Thank you for fighting for us. Happy Veteran's Day." An unexpected, unplanned moment of extraordinary kindness that engulfed us so suddenly that many of us did not know how to handle the pride we felt or the tears that ran so freely. Who were these wonderful kids?

I contacted Arlington Cemetery and requested their help so that we might be able to thank the students for what they did for us. It took some time, but the staff at Arlington was able to locate the group and contacted the school for me. Shortly thereafter, Mike Smith, the Vice Principal of the school called me to explain who they were. They were 8<sup>th</sup> Graders from Willink Middle School in Webster, New York, who had raised money during the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade to finance their 8<sup>th</sup> Grade trip to Washington D.C. 319 kids on eight buses with teachers and parents. Mr. Smith told me that the students had started the clapping on their own and had not been prompted by a teacher or parent. If you have the time to write them a note or send a photo, they will treasure what is sent to them.

Mr. Mike Smith, Assistant Principal  
Willink Middle School  
900 Publishers Parkway  
Webster, NY 14580

*1,254 members! 520 Life Members!*

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I was honored to place a wreath at The Tomb of The Unknown Soldier with our Vice President, Hector Ramos, Secretary Bruce Hadley and Safeside President Jerry Nelson. We were unable to go to the grave of VSPA member JJ Chestnut who was KIA as a Capitol Police Officer, or the grave of Leebarnard Chavis, a Safeside member KIA in Iraq, due to the number of funerals scheduled for that day. The wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown was our collective effort to honor them as well as the Unknown and all other Veterans.

We had been scheduled to place a wreath at the Air Force Memorial, but rain, traffic and our scheduled arrival at Andrews AFB caused that event to be delayed until the following Tuesday. I went to the Memorial with VSPA members Larry Fleming and Bruce Hadley, along with my wife Lise and Larry's wife, Martha. Larry and Bruce assisted me in the placement of the wreath. It was very quiet and there was light rain. We were the only ones there when a group of students arrived. Our moment of silence had seemingly come to an end and we prepared to leave. The group was small, about ten junior high school students plus parents and teachers. The rain did not seem to bother them. They were quiet and respectful as they looked around the memorial. Eventually, they approached us, extended their hands and thanked us for our service, something that we were not prepared for in any way. They wanted to talk to us and to pose for pictures with us in front of the memorial. When we told them that one of the honor guard statues was a woman, the girls in the group stood near her with great pride. They were from a small Christian middle school in San Juan Capistrano, California. They had also raised money to finance their trip to Washington, D.C., but at that moment, it seemed as if they had done it all just to honor us.

The Veteran's Day activities at The Wall were very special. Thousands of people heard Colin Powell speak to the group not only as a Vietnam Veteran, but as a General who remembered what it was like to be on the line at the same time we were. When General Powell finished speaking, we had six VSPA members place three wreaths at The Wall in honor of our 111 who did not survive the war. VSPA Kennel Master Bill Cummings and VSPA Historian Kelly Bateman with K-9 Rio placed a wreath to honor the K-9 handlers and their partners. I escorted our Gold Star Mom, Helen Lehman whose son Millard was KIA at Binh Thuy. We placed a wreath to honor all Air Policemen and Security Policemen. VSPA Members Jerry Nelson and Pete Villarreal placed a wreath to honor the members from Operation Safeside. At the conclusion of the wreath placement in which 50 wreaths were placed by various groups of Vietnam Veterans, General Powell walked the line and shook our hands. I had the honor as your president to present him with our challenge coin.

Our awards banquet was the best ever, with an honor corridor of all guidon bearers and our color guard to greet our TOP COP, Brigadier General Mary Kay Hertog, the Director of all USAF Security Forces. The Air Force Band provided patriotic music and the United States Air Force Color Guard presented the colors. General Hertog gave a wonderful presentation and even jumped from the elevated stage in full dress blues with a skirt to give WWII Marine Veteran "Annie" a hug on the occasion of the Marine Corps birthday. General Hertog's presentation was not just an overview of current Security Forces operations around the world, but also a reflection of her commitment to the families of our deployed Security Forces, something she understands on a deeply personal level because she was a teenager when her father, Colonel Don Reeves, was the Security Police Squadron Commander at Phan Rang Air Base in 68 - 69. She was very surprised to know that she was also an Affiliate Member of the VSPA because her father was our newest Life Member #450. We were entertained with a video of our last three reunions that had been compiled by Erlyce Pekas, our Gold Star Sweetheart who had been engaged to Millard Lehman when he was KIA at Binh Thuy. Her brother, Mick, provided the wonderful vocal accompaniment. We thanked Colonel Bateman and his staff from the 316<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron for hosting us at Andrews Air Force Base, especially after they had just experienced the tragic death of a former Security Forces troop from Moody AFB, leaving her two-year old son and her SSGt. husband who is a member of Colonel Bateman's staff. We "passed the hat" during dinner and collected \$1,695 for the surviving son. As I was making the presentation to Colonel Bateman, Jack "The Old Cowboy Poet" Smith

came forward with a handful of cash and said, "That is not enough" and pushed it well over \$1,700.

When I was elected to be your president in 2002, we had 663 current members. We had just started the Life Member Program with 33 Life Members. As I end my final message as your president, we have 1,254 current members, including 520 Life Members. What an incredible testament to the VSPA as an organization and to all of you for our sense of brotherhood!

I extend my sincere thanks to the elected officers and the appointed staff (who are all listed on page two) and to all of the former officers and staff who have worked so hard. Total commitment, thousands of man-hours, all unpaid to make something very special work for the men who stood post with us, for the men who knew that when they went on post, they were responsible for the security of an air base, the planes and assets, the safety of the people and the man on the next post. Over the years, I have done my best to make sure that they were recognized for their hard work.

It has been an honor to serve on your board for a total of nine years. I look to the future with great pride, with the promise of providing continuity for your new leaders and the hope of many more great reunions.

My best to all of you.  
Steve Gattis, President  
Life Member #49  
Cam Ranh Bay 68 - 69

**VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION  
MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS FOR 2007  
PRESENTED TO MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION  
FOR THEIR VOLUNTEER SERVICE TO THE VSPA AND FOR  
THEIR COMMITMENT TO OUR COUNTRY**

The Eagle Award for Leadership was presented to Brigadier General Mary Kay Hertog, USAF Director of Security Forces, with sincere appreciation for her life experience as the daughter of our Life Member Donald Reeves who was one of our squadron commanders at Phan Rang Air Base, and for her extraordinary performance while wearing the same Security Police Shield that we wore in Vietnam and Thailand. From daughter to TOP COP, we are proud to call her one of our own.

The Mike Daoust Bayonet Award was presented to the following VSPA members for their tireless dedication to the VSPA, our members and their families. Like our Past President Mike Daoust, these members gave their time and personal energy to the VSPA on a daily basis, year after year:

Phil Carroll, VSPA Membership Chairman  
Bill Cummings, VSPA K-9 Kennel Master  
Van & Joyce Digby, BX Operations  
Gary Jones, Flight Chief of the Web Site Restricted Area QRT  
Bill Marshall, VSPA Bulletin Board Flight Chief  
Jerry Nelson, President of the SAFESIDE Association  
Don Poss, VSPA Web Master  
Hector Ramos, Vice President and Chairman of Parade Planning

The Calvin "Monk" Pope Brotherhood Award was presented to Alvin Matthews for his enduring commitment to our brotherhood, for his financial support, his tireless effort to preserve the honor and valor of our service in Vietnam and Thailand through the Warriors Medal of Valor, and for being the core of hospitality in our Hospitality Room by providing and preparing pulled-pork barbeque for all members of the VSPA and their families who have attended our reunions for several years.

Bruce Noel Hadley for his heartfelt effort to provide information to our members and their families. His courage, compassion and dedication have impacted the lives of those who would otherwise fall victim to Agent Orange related prostate cancer.

Gloria Villarreal for her heartfelt dedication as Chaplain of the VSPA Sisterhood. Her year-round commitment has had a positive impact on the lives of our members and has healed wounds that cannot be seen.

Janet Matthews-Wise for her consistent level of dedication that has offered hope to Air Force Security Policemen and augmentees who served in Vietnam and Thailand and the opportunity to know the peace that comes with our brotherhood.

Lew Goldberg for his outstanding effort to develop and maintain contact with our members who served at Binh Thuy Air Base.

Jim Watson for his outstanding effort to develop and maintain contact with our members who served at Ubon Air Base.

Lonnie Beeson for over 40 years of continuing service to our country from U-Tapao to Afghanistan.

Chaplain Jim Stastny for his first-hand knowledge of our service in Vietnam and Thailand. His heartfelt dedication as our Chaplain has had a year-round positive impact on the lives of our members and has healed wounds that cannot be seen.

Chaplain William Cooley for his first-hand knowledge of our service in Vietnam and Thailand. His heartfelt dedication as our Chaplain has had a year-round positive impact on the lives of our members and has healed wounds that cannot be seen.

John Paul Coakley for his courage, compassion and dedication to our membership and his heartfelt effort to provide information to our members and their families regarding alcoholism.

Richard Holstein for his courage, compassion and dedication to our membership and his heartfelt effort to provide information to our members and their families regarding alcoholism.

Steve Hall for his outstanding effort to preserve the history of our reunions through his skill as a professional photographer.

Randy Stutler for his generosity and support of the VSPA through the donation of his extraordinary artwork.

Thomas Tessier "Tango1" for two years, eight months and 20 days of outstanding service at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, and for the creation an endowment of a scholarship for Vietnam Veterans at Southern New Hampshire University that has enabled Veterans and their families to obtain an education that would not have been possible without his assistance.

John and Pam Talbot for their generosity and support of the VSPA's J.J. Chestnut Memorial Scholarship.

Kelly and Vicky Bateman for their commitment to the preservation of honor and valor associated with the squadron history of air policemen and security policemen who served in Vietnam and Thailand. Their personal creation of 36 guidons representing each of our squadrons enabled our members to march with pride in a parade to honor their service in Vietnam and Thailand and celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Wall.

John Tudor for his support of VSPA members by providing guided tours of the Gettysburg Battlefield during our 2007 reunion in Washington, D.C.

Ernie Childers for his assistance to our K-9 Kennel Master as a Unit Coordinator for the 432<sup>nd</sup> Security Police Squadron.

Richard Garcia for his assistance to our Vice President in the preparation of guidons for the parade and the development of a fund raising program to honor the reunion music of Calvin "Monk" Pope with all funds to go to Monk's wife, Helen.

To Ken Neal for his continuing outstanding effort to preserve the history of our reunions as a VSPA Photographer.

John Homa for his generous support and fund raising activities associated with the Nemo War Dog Heroes Memorial.

Frank Ybarbo for his leadership and tireless coordination of the VSPA Color Guard for their participation in the Washington, D.C. parade down Constitution Avenue to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Wall.

Ray Rash for his selfless contributions to assist members prepare for their participation in the VSPA Color Guard.

William Sautter for his leadership, coordination and training of 36 guidon bearers who participated in the Washington, D.C. parade down Constitution Avenue to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Wall.

Dave Gudes for his coordination and development of the design for the VSPA brassard worn by the Color Guard, Guidon Bearers and members of the VSPA who participated in the Washington, D.C. parade down Constitution Avenue to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Wall.

Newell Swartz for his calm, caring leadership on the VSPA Internet bulletin boards.

Don Hamilton for his calm, caring leadership on the VSPA Internet bulletin boards.

Duke Windsor for being a living example of our motto *We Take Care of Our Own* and providing a life membership to John Sharpe who served with him at Binh Thuy Air Base.

Terry Austin for his financial generosity and support of the VSPA.

Art Rodgers for being a living example of our motto *We Take Care of Our Own* when he began the clean-up and clearing of property for a VSPA member Jack Roberts who had evacuated his home due to a hurricane.



Larry Fleming for being a living example of our motto *We Take Care of Our Own* by providing outstanding assistance to VSPA President Steve Gattis during the planning process for the 2007 VSPA reunion.

Don Graham for his outstanding effort to make sure that the VSPA had the opportunity to plan and prepare for the parade and all events to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Wall.

Larry Ernsting for his outstanding work as the Editor of our newsletter *Guardmount*.

Charles Penley for his outstanding work to preserve our history as the Web Master of the web site for the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Association.

Alecia Cash for her generous financial support of the VSPA by providing software for our Web Master.

Simon Rodriguez of American Emblematic for his extraordinary support of the VSPA through the design and production of challenge coins and commemorative pins that preserve the honor and history of our service in Vietnam and Thailand.

Howard Yates for his commitment to our brotherhood, for his poetry and writing that has become a source of healing for wounds that cannot be seen.

Terry Sasek for his commitment to our brotherhood, for his poetry and writing that has become a source of healing for wounds that cannot be seen.

Juli Warner for her outstanding assistance to our support program for USAF Security Forces personnel and their military working dogs deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Djibouti and Korea.

## THE WARRIORS MEDAL OF VALOR NATIVE AMERICAN NATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES



*Life Member Alvin Matthews with his daughter, Janet Matthews-Wise.*

The Warriors Medal of Valor from the Native American Nations was created and crafted by a Native American Chief who served in Vietnam. The medal may be awarded to any deserving Vietnam Veteran and is not limited to Native Americans. Our ability and opportunity to award the Warriors Medal of Valor has been approved by the local Tribal Council and made possible by Life Member Alvin Matthews, who was the first Chairman of the VSPA Committee for the selection and presentation of the Warriors Medal of Valor.

MSgt. Matthews was the first VSPA member to receive the Warriors Medal of Valor for his service in Vietnam. He received his medal from a local Chief while attending a Cherokee Pow Wow in 2005. Since then, he has worked to make it possible for the VSPA to present the medal.

Alvin and his daughter, Janet, made all of the arrangements to present the Warriors Medal of Valor at our

reunions in 2006 and 2007, and personally financed the awards for our members. The presentation of the Warriors Medal is a very moving experience and an honor for all recipients. Sadly, Janet's Daddy attended his final Guardmount this year. To honor her father, Janet will continue to make the Warriors Medal of Valor available to the VSPA by chairing the selection committee of VSPA members who review the nominations. Several of our members took care of their own and gave contributions to the VSPA in Alvin's name to ensure that the financial requirements for the award would always be met.

#### 2007 RECIPIENTS:

Gregory Cain for his service at Binh Thuy Air Base, for being available 24-hours a day to assist Veterans, including assisting the local police during incidents involving Veterans, counseling armed suicidal Veterans, establishment of a food bank for homeless Veterans and their families, and for taking care of one of our own who has had life-threatening complications due to exposure to Agent Orange.

Millard Lehman, KIA Binh Thuy Air Base, presented to Associate Member Helen Lehman, our Gold Star Mother of Millard Lehman, to honor her son who was killed while sounding the alarm during an attack at Binh Thuy Air Base, and to honor her for the love that she gives to each of us as she represents the experience all our mothers could have had.

Jack Roberts for his service at Phan Rang Air Base, Tan Son Nhut Air Base and Vung Tau, and for his continuing service to all Veterans, including his tireless work with Local, State and Federal leaders to recognize Veterans and their issues related to service in Vietnam and Thailand.

John Risse for his actions as a K-9 handler with his partner Duke (645F) at Pleiku Air Base on 16 February 1966 when they were directly involved in repelling a Viet Cong attack in which seven Viet Cong were killed during the attack. K-9 Duke was later injured in another attack, causing John to be temporarily assigned to a Security Alert Team (SAT). As a member of the SAT, John was involved in repelling another attack on 22 April 1966.

Pete Villarreal for his leadership as an NCO in Operation SAFESIDE at Phan Rang and Bien Hoa Air Bases, for sharing his knowledge of combat experience and training at subsequent assignments, including Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, for his continuing service to the VSPA as SAFESIDE Liaison, for his on-going support of deployed Security Forces personnel in Iraq, and for his development of Operation Shoedrop, a program to send shoes to children in Iraq. The shoes were received and distributed by deployed members of the 822<sup>nd</sup> Security Forces Squadron of Moody Air Force Base.

**THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE!**

# THANK YOU SAFESIDE!

The members of the Safeside Association donated \$1,000 to stock our Hospitality Room in Washington D.C. and helped prepare the room for us. More importantly, they made sure that everything was purchased in the correct locations with the appropriate tax stamps so that we would not create alcoholic beverage issues for the hotel. Yes, if you party in Virginia, you must purchase your liquor in Virginia, not Maryland or Washington D.C.! The members of the Board of the Safeside Association, under the leadership of VSPA members President Jerry Nelson and Vice President Pete Villarreal, also ensured that every member of the Safeside Association who attended the reunion was a member of the VSPA! Thank you for your brotherhood and support of the VSPA!

## VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING NOVEMBER 11, 2007 - WASHINGTON, D.C.

### AGENDA

1. 1830 hours Call to order VSPA President Steve Gattis
2. Moment of Silence for those who did not come home and for our departed VSPA comrades, who are listed at Life Member #111.
3. Invocation Chaplain Jim Stastny
4. Pledge of Allegiance Secretary Bruce Hadley
5. VSPA SISTERHOOD meeting started at the same time as our meeting in an adjacent room. Their agenda will include:
  - 5.1 Introductions
  - 5.2 Presentation by Associate Member Kim Bayes regarding support of loved ones in the aftermath of the parade and events at The Wall.
  - 5.3 Discussion
  - 5.4 November 11 birthday celebration for Mom Lehman and Lise Gattis.
6. VSPA Business meeting called to order again after a quorum was declared of the elected officers by President Steve Gattis.
7. **INTRODUCTION OF OFFICERS AND APPOINTED POSITIONS** - by President Steve Gattis

*1,254 members! 520 Life Members!*

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All officers are elected for two years. Elections will be held next year in 2008.

### ELECTED POSITIONS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| President      | Steve Gattis, Life Member #49, Glen Rose, Texas (Cam Ranh Bay 68 - 69)  |
| Vice President | Hector Ramos, Life Member #165, Carteret, New Jersey (Binh Thuy 69-70).   |
| Secretary      | Bruce Hadley, Life Member #71, Forrest Hills, New York (Bien Hoa 61 - 62)   |
| Treasurer      | Den Cook, Life Member #300, Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Tan Son Nhut 67 - 68). Den was unable to attend due to medical problems and surgery on November 9.   |
| Historian      | Don Graham, Life Member #7, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (Tuy Hoa 68 - 69). Don was recently diagnosed with prostate cancer and was unable to attend the reunion. He notified the VSPA that he would not longer be able to fulfill his position as Historian due to his activities in support of local Veterans and his own medical problems. Kelly Bateman, Life Member #118, Ubon K-9 70 - 71, Wemberly, Texas was appointed to complete the final year of Don's term due to his ongoing contact and working relationship with the Security Forces Museum at Lackland AFB. |

### APPOINTED POSITIONS - All positions appointed by the President with approval of the Board.

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Web Master(s)        | Don Poss, Life Member #37, Corona, California (Da Nang K-9 65 - 66) Don appoints the K-9 Web Master, Monty Moore (unable to attend), the Bulletin Board Flight Leader, Bill Marshall, Life Member #85, and the QRT Flight Chief, Gary Jones.                |
| Membership Chairman  | Phil Carroll, Life Member #336. Gladstone, Oregon (Takhli and NKP K-9 70 - 71).   |
| Guardmount           | Larry Ernsting, Life Member #139, Clay Center, Kansas (Phan Rang-Safeside, Pleiku, Tuy Hoa, 68 - 70). Assisted by Mike Kennedy, Life Member #35, Fontana, California (Bien Hoa 69 - 70). Larry was unable to attend due to recent knee replacement surgery. |
| Chaplain             | Steve Janke, Carlstadt, New Jersey (Cam Ranh Bay K-9 69 -70). Steve was unable to attend, he sent his prayers for a great reunion.  |
| Chaplain             | Jim Stastny, Gaithersburg, Maryland (Korat K-9 70 - 71).  |
| Chaplain             | Bill Cooley, Canyon Lake, Texas (Cam Ranh Bay 71-72). Bill was unable to attend and sent his prayers for a great reunion.   |
| Chaplain             | Jeff Kerkhoff, West Covina, California (Tan Son Nhut 72-73)   |
| Photographer         | Tony Morris, Life Member #70, Shererville, Indiana (Cam Ranh Bay 69 - 70)   |
| Photographer         | Ken Neal, Life Member #80, Los Angeles California. (Ubon 68 -69 and Udon RTAFB 74 75)   |
| Photographer         | Steve Hall, Orange, California (Binh Thuy 68 - 69)  |
| Photographer         | Lou Reda, Norwalk, Ohio, (Phan Rang 68-69)  |
| BX Sales Manager     | Van Digby, Life Member #59, Bay City Michigan (Phan Rang 67 - 68)   |
| VSPA Service Officer | Bud Owens, Life Member #56, North Hampton, New Hampshire (Binh Thuy 66 - 67) Bud is unable to attend due to financial issues with his home.   |
| K-9 Kennel Master    | Bill Cummings, Life Member #173, Tucson, Arizona (U-Tapao K-9 70 - 71).   |
| Safeside Liaison     | Pete Villarreal, Life Member #14, North Pole, Alaska (six months) and Corpus Christi, Texas (six months) (Phan Rang and Bien Hoa - Safeside 68 - 69, and NKP 73 - 74)   |

Prior to reports, reading and approval of the minutes, President Steve Gattis asked if there was anyone in the room who was not a current member of the VSPA. All present were members in good standing and eligible to vote during business proceedings.

## 8. REPORTS

Treasurer Report - Secretary Bruce Hadley for Treasurer Denis Cook who was unable to attend due to medical problems and surgery. Beginning balance \$68,800.93, income \$27,910.58, expenses \$13,936.25, ending balance \$82,775.26 as of October 2007. Motion to accept made by Van Digby, seconded by Tony Morris; motion carried.

Historian Report made by Kelly Bateman for Historian Don Graham who was unable to attend due to medical problems.

Web Site - VSPA.com - Web Master Don Poss gave an update on the web site and discussed upgrades and redesign that included the BX coming online in January 2008, and putting the pictures of VSPA officers on the web page. He mentioned that he was working on preserving VSPA history by offering website support to K-9 and Safeside if they chose to be under the auspices of VSPA on our server. Each organization would provide their own web master. Don mentioned that for help desk type issues and questions, Gary Jones was the person to contact. Motion to accept made by Jim Stastny, seconded by Dave Forman; motion carried.

Membership Report - Chairman Phil Carroll reported that as October 6, 2006 VSPA had 907 active members and 442 life memberships. As November 11, 2007 there were 1,131 active members (an increase of 224) and 454 life memberships (an increase of 12). Motion made to accept report and to revise our bylaws on eligibility for membership to read service in Vietnam or Thailand between July 1, 1958 and May 15, 1975. Motion made by Vernon Anderson, seconded by Bill Cummings; motion carried.

Guardmount Report - President Steve Gattis reported that the Guardmount is now a PDF file in an Adobe Reader and printable to reduce mailings and postage. Members with computers are requested to assist the VSPA in controlling cost by updating their on-line information to indicate that they will view Guardmount on-line and that they do not want Guardmount mailed to their home address. Access to Guardmount on the web page does not take members off the mailing list. To reiterate, you must request to be taken off the Guardmount mailing list.

Scholarship Committee - Chairman Jim Lebowitz. Committee members are Vice President Hector Ramos, Albert Habercorn, Bud Owens and David Adams. Hector reported that two applications had been received from students Kendal Mills (University of Alabama) and Phillip Smith (University of Nebraska). The committee recommended that each student be awarded \$500. Motion to accept made by Al Barnett, seconded by Victor Arce; motion carried.

BX Sales Report - BX Sales Manager Van Digby reported that three new items had been added for sale: a K-9 patch, the combat infantry badge, and two back packs one with wheels. Motion made to accept by Lew Goldberg, seconded by Dave Forman; motion carried.

VSPA Service Officer - Bud Owens was unable to attend but is available to assist any member with the VA Claims process.

K-9 Report - Bill Cummings, Kennel Master, gave an update on the Nemo War Dog Heroes Memorial at Lackland AFB, and the Old Dawgs and Pups Program. Phil Carroll reported the support of the Leatherman Company in donating several thousand dollars in equipment for K-9, and a wholesale price on the multipurpose tool that is being resold at retail to raise funds for the program. Phil also displayed the VSPA commemorative knife that was specially engraved for VSPA by Leatherman and is available for \$50 at the reunion. All proceeds will go to the Old Dawgs and Pups Program. Motion made to accept by Bill Sautter, seconded by Frank Polites; motion carried.

Safeside Report made by Pete Villarreal, Safeside Liaison. Motion made to accept by Vernon Anderson, seconded by Wendell Wallace; motion carried.

Steve Gattis gave an explanation of the Liaison position and the need to increase the program to allow for one per base and thanked Lew Goldberg for his work to coordinate contact with the Binh Thuy troops.

- 9. **Approval of the 2006 Minutes** - Secretary Bruce Hadley read the minutes of the 2006 business meeting. Several cosmetic changes to language were made. Motion to accept with cosmetic changes made by Bill Cummings, seconded by Tony Morris; motion carried.

10. **OLD BUSINESS**

- 10.1 VSPA History Book Update - President Steve Gattis reported that the biographies, photos and rubbings have all been compiled and are in the final stages of editing before the book goes to print. Correction proofs are expected in the next three to four months. Delays have been due to the need to sell at least 300 copies of the book before work could begin, extensive research and editing.
- 10.2 Commemorative Shield - President Steve Gattis reported that Tim Waage had moved overseas and had a new Email address for Tim Waage to order badges. The order form will be updated and placed on the web site.
- 10.3 Bulletin Boards and Rules of Use - Don Poss reported that it was controlled by VOY. Profanity and personal attacks were expressly prohibited. Violators of the rules would be locked out by VOY accordingly.
- 10.4 Reunion Site Selection for 2008 - Steve Gattis reported that Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico was selected at the 2006 reunion in Las Vegas. The contract is in place with the Marriott. The registration fee will be significantly reduced due to the area. The dates will be October 15-18, 2008.
- 10.5 Selection of Reunion Site for 2009 - Steve Gattis reported:

| <b>Reunion sites - Places we have been</b> | <b>US REGION</b> |
|--|------------------|
| Atlanta, Georgia 1995                      | East             |
| San Antonio, Texas 1996                    | Central          |
| Pensacola, Florida 1997                    | East             |

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Washington D.C. 1998                              | East    |
| Las Vegas, Nevada 1999                            | West    |
| San Antonio, Texas 2000                           | Central |
| Hampton, Virginia 2001                            | East    |
| Dayton, Ohio 2002                                 | Central |
| San Antonio, Texas 2003                           | Central |
| Tucson, Arizona 2004 10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary | West    |
| Valdosta, Georgia 2005                            | East    |
| Las Vegas, Nevada 2006                            | West    |
| Washington DC 2007                                | East    |
| Albuquerque, New Mexico                           | West    |

Nominations/Suggestions/Presentations: President Steve Gattis reported that he and Don Poss had conducted a test to determine whether on-line voting could be used in an Email format to select a reunion site. The test revealed many many problems, including multiple votes by the same individual for different sites, failure to follow directions, blank votes and bases that no longer existed or were overseas. Members present in the meeting voted to hold all future site selection activities in accordance with existing procedures at the annual business meeting.

Luke AFB, Phoenix, Arizona was selected as the primary site for our 2009 reunion. In the event, problems preclude holding our reunion at Luke, the next base to received the most votes will be the back up site for 2009 reunion. That base was Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas.

A recommendation was made to consider making Lackland AFB a recurring location for future reunions every four or five years. The recommendation was tabled until the 2008 business meeting based upon a motion by Hector Ramos, seconded by Tony Morris, that we conduct research on the impact at Lackland so that we do not overlap other organizations and overwhelm the personnel at Lackland; motion carried.

## 11. NEW BUSINESS

- 11.1 Presentation of information from the Ad Hoc Committee by Sam Lewis regarding the use of the web site to vote on reunion locations and the election of officers. Don Poss and Newell Swartz expressed that there should be the involvement of all members in good standing in the voting process for the leadership of the VSPA, not just those members present at the reunion. There was some discussion as to whether the selection of reunion sites should be voted on the same way as well. It was decided that the selection of reunion sites should be voted on by those who attended the reunions and were present.

A motion was made to change the by-laws of VSPA to allow all members in good standing to vote on the election of officers. Motion was made by Newell Swartz, seconded by Keith Young; motion carried with three opposed.

President Steve Gattis appointed Don Poss and Newell Swartz to co-chair a committee to determine whether on-line voting was possible and, if on-line voting was possible, to develop a procedure

including all related programming to implement the voting process on our web site, with Don Poss in charge of all programming. (Please see the following article regarding 2008 election of VSPA officers).

- 11.2 Membership - Chairman Phil Carroll reported that the renewal dates for membership dues were due on the first of the month twelve months after the date of joining VSPA. So for example, if a person joins VSPA on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, their dues become due on March 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year.
- 11.3 Election of Officers - Two Year Term of Office - Elections are scheduled for 2008 for the following positions: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. Don Graham resigned due to local Veteran activities in which he drives Veterans to the VVA Hospital. Don was also recently diagnosed with cancer. Kelly Bateman was appointed to complete term.
- 11.4 Appointed Positions - The following positions were reappointed by the President of the Association to assist the elected officers with the management of the various functions of the VSPA.
  - 4.1 Web Master - Don Poss who appoints the Assistant Web Master for K-9 (Monty Moore), the Bulletin Board Flight Leader (Bill Marshall), and the QRT fight Chief (Gary Jones) to assist members with computer problems
  - 4.2 Membership Chairman - Phil Carroll, Assistant Janet Wise, Daughter of Life Member Al Matthews.
  - 4.3 BX Sales Manager Van Digby, Assistants Joyce and Kari Digby
    - 4.4 Chaplains Steve Janke (New Jersey), Jim Stastny (Maryland) and Bill Wheeler (Texas), and Jeff Kerkhoff (California).
    - 4.5 Photographer(s) Tony Morris, Steve Hall and Ken Neal and Lou Reda, who is a newspaper photographer and retired police officer.
    - 4.6 Guardmount Editor - Larry Ernsting
    - 4.7 VSPA Service Officer - Bud Owens
    - 4.8 VSPA Kennel Master - Bill Cummings
    - 4.9 Safeside Liaison - Pete Villarreal
    - 4.10 Base Liaison for Binh Thuy - Lew Goldberg
    - 4.11 Other base liaisons positions are available. Members are requested to volunteer.

## 12. ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

There being no announcements, motion made to adjourn by Ken Neal, seconded by Dave Foreman; motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 0115 hours by President Steve Gattis.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Bruce N. Hadley, Jr.  
Secretary



## **2008 ELECTION OF VSPA OFFICERS**

VSPA members who attended our reunion in Washington D.C. voted to modify our by-laws and the election process so that the election would no longer be conducted only at the reunion business meeting. The majority of members at the last business meeting voted to change the process so that all members would have the opportunity to vote for the officers who manage the association. A committee was appointed to determine whether electronic voting could take place via our web site and to develop a process. The committee included Don Poss, Newell Swartz, Sam Lewis and Don Hamilton.

Don Poss thoroughly investigated electronic voting via the Internet and found that it could not be done in an efficient, cost effective manner. He looked at the process as both our Web Master and as a VSPA member who fully supported the idea of voting on-line. Other organizations that had attempted the process had numerous problems that far exceeded our ability to resolve, including multiple votes from different computers and the inability to accurately identify voters who emailed ballots. We simply do not have the manpower to search our records to verify current membership based upon multiple email addresses (like [pullmyfinger@email.com](mailto:pullmyfinger@email.com)) that have changed without notice to the VSPA, which is something we experience on a daily basis. Multiple votes on-line are a reality, not because people are dishonest, but because computers can be very confusing for some people who might worry that their ballot has not been received and they send it again, or they send it from another computer which could make them appear to be a different person. The only other alternative is to have a mail-in ballot that you can print from our web site, or receive in the mail and return.

For those members who are reading this on-line, you must be a current member in order to vote and read the bios of those who have declared their intention to run for office. Therefore, the bios and the ballot form have been posted in the Restricted Area of our web site. To vote, you must print the ballot and mail it to our Membership Chairman, Phil Carroll WITH A POSTMARK NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 3. He will verify your membership status and make certain that only one vote is submitted.

There are five positions up for election this year: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. All other positions in the VSPA are staff positions appointed by the president and board based upon their expertise and willingness to serve the members of the VSPA. Elected officers will be confirmed and installed at our reunion in Albuquerque in October. The term of office is two years. The positions DO NOT receive a salary and are worked on a volunteer basis.

The following VSPA members have declared their intention to run for an elected VSPA position. Each person listed below has been a member in good standing for at least TWO YEARS. They are all Life Members. They have attended our reunions and have the ability to attend future business meetings that are held at our annual reunions. They communicate via the Internet on a regular basis and have made the commitment to provide the time necessary to serve in the respective positions that they seek.

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**FOR PRESIDENT: Newell Swartz, Life Member #262, Phan Rang and Phu Cat 66 - 67:**

Brothers of the VSPA,

In October of this year, the office of President of the Vietnam Security Police Association (VSPA) will become vacant. After careful thought and consideration, I have decided to seek the office of President of VSPA.

I can and will devote the time and energy this position requires, so that we may continue to take care of our own. Overall, I am very satisfied with the great work of all those who currently serve as elected officials, appointed officers, and the many staff volunteers. I am happy and proud to be a Life Member of VSPA, which I joined over four years ago. I have been to the last four reunions and try to keep up with current issues of the Association.

I hope to bring about some changes through convincing you, the membership, that my ideas and proposals will enhance and improve the VSPA as a brotherhood. Our members who have served us deserve our thanks, and I appreciate their bedrock foundation of accomplishments that my new proposals can build upon. A few changes I will bring about include delegating more authority to staff members based on their unique experiences, skills, and proven commitment to the Association as outlined in our constitution, in order to get some things done in a more timely manner. And yes, the responsibility and accountability resides with the office of President. The most critical of these are: #1 getting Guardmount out on a regular quarterly basis; and #2 finishing our history book (if it's not already done by the time of our reunion). I also will do everything I can to provide frequent and timely updates on projects such as these through emails and the bulletin boards, so our members never feel left in the dark.

Another priority will be to complete an election system which will give 100% of our members the opportunity to vote in the election of VSPA officers. I have worked with a group of our members on this issue. Significant progress has already been made but there is room for improvement.

On a personal note, I want to tell you a little about myself. I retired from the Army as a Warrant Officer in October 1976, having completed my twenty years (11 ½ USAF Security Police and 8 ½ years Army CID Agent). In January 1977, I entered the Arizona Highway Patrol Academy and retired 25 years later as a Sergeant, at the age of 63. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. My wife of 48 years and I are both in good health. My current pastimes are gold prospecting, the VSPA, keeping up with a garden, pets, and keeping 11/2 acres shipshape. I am a member of the SAC Elite Guard Association, the CID Agents Association, the Arizona Highway Patrol Association, and the Roadrunner Prospector's Club. My 45 years of experience in military and civilian law enforcement have taught me to be my own man when I must; make decisions on my own, but to also value team work and welcome camaraderie. My military assignments have taken me to England, Spain, Germany, Libya, Turkey,

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Korea and Vietnam. In the USA, I have been to Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia and New Hampshire.

I believe my strong desire to serve the members of the VSPA, my years as a supervisor and as an elected district representative to the Highway Patrol Association, should help me to make an intelligent argument for or against an issue. Should I be elected president, I look forward to working closely with a great group of men and women who are already serving you on a daily basis. I will always value input from membership.

The VSPA is a growing, thriving organization with many staff members who do an unimaginable amount of work to provide services for all of us and I value each and every one of them. I see one of my primary duties as providing them with the resources and discretionary authority to accomplish their job.

Of all the places in the world I have been and of all the people I have ever met, two things stand out for me: One, the USA is the most beautiful country with more to offer in splendor than any other place on earth, and two, the VSPA enjoys the utmost in camaraderie and has truly welcomed us home. I have served my country and State and now would serve VSPA as the key member leading us into future years of growth and enjoyment for our members. I will dedicate my efforts on your behalf to assure our best years as a brotherhood are ahead of us. I sincerely believe that as your President, this will prove to be true.

In summation, it is my view that we already have an outstanding group of core members who serve us on a daily basis. My vision for leading VSPA will be "enhancing what's right with the VSPA" as opposed to an attitude of "fixing what's wrong with the VSPA."

Sincerely,  
Newell Swartz  
[roaddog2007@yahoo.com](mailto:roaddog2007@yahoo.com)

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**FOR VICE PRESIDENT: Hector Ramos, Life Member #165, Binh Thuy 69 - 70:**



I was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Brooklyn, New York, where I graduated from high school and joined the US Air Force. I served four years as an Air Policeman & Armed Forces Police in the Panama Canal Zone, Tower Guard at Binh Thuy Air Base, Vietnam, and finally, as Base Security in Bangor, Maine. After my discharge, I completed a two-year AAS Degree program to allow myself a choice between the NYPD, which was recruiting me, and the engineering field.

Once I succeeded with school, the obvious choice for me and a new challenge was engineering. I currently work for PSE&G in Newark as a Supervising Engineer in the Electric Sub & Switching Station Group. I'm nearing 38 years in the field of Engineering/Construction and still enjoy what I do. I've had the opportunity to travel during my career and work in New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida, New Orleans, North Carolina, Ohio and Puerto Rico.

My leadership experience in military associations includes 2nd Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Eastern New Jersey Chapter 779, and Vice President of the Vietnam Security Police Association, our national USAF organization that I joined in March, 2001.

**My Candidacy for a Third Term as Vice President of the VSPA:**

In the two terms I've served as Vice President of the VSPA, I'm extremely proud to say that the organization has seen a substantial growth in membership, including almost 400 Life memberships so that now we have over 1,200 active members and over 500 Life Members. Alongside our esteemed president Steve Gattis, and with the vision and help of charter members, board members and volunteers, the VSPA and our legacy in SEA is widely recognized by current USAF Security Forces members, Veterans' groups, historical/educational resource groups and, of course, our own VSPA brothers. Although it would be easy for me to list the individual & team accomplishments that I've been involved with in over eight years of membership, I'm most proud of how EVERYONE who has been associated with this organization has, and continues to make it a truly rewarding experience.

Sincerely,

Hector Ramos

[HRAMOS926@COMCAST.NET](mailto:HRAMOS926@COMCAST.NET)

**FOR SECRETARY: Bruce Hadley and Don Hamilton (listed alphabetically):**

**FOR SECRETARY: Bruce Hadley, Life Member #71, Bien Hoa 61-62:**



I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1959 and was discharged in 1963 as an Airman Second Class. I served in Detachment #9, 2nd ADVON, Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Viet Nam in 1961-1962.

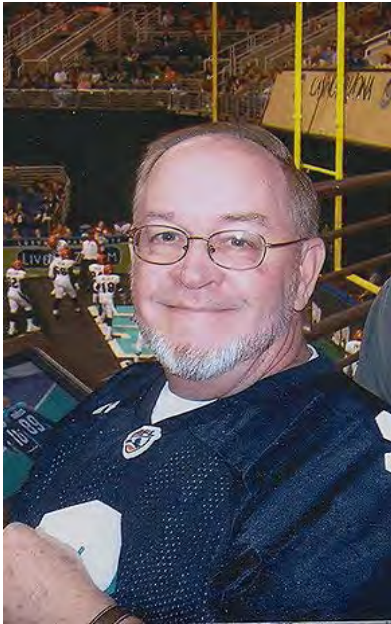
I graduated from Brooklyn College, New York City University, New York, in 1974 with a BA in Economics under the G.I. Bill while serving as a Customs Inspector in U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security. Presently, I am a Supervisor in Field Operations at JFK International Airport, Jamaica, NY.

I joined the VSPA in June, 1998, have been the Secretary for the last four years and have attended numerous reunions. The major concern I have for our brotherhood is your awareness of Agent Orange related Prostate Cancer - GET CHECKED NOW! I am a certified NRA instructor in pistols, rifles and shotguns. I also instruct women in a league that shoots rifles at a local city range and have done so for the past three years. One of my great pleasures is the opportunity to preserve our history while talking with the young troops who have followed in our footsteps.

Sincerely,  
Bruce Hadley  
[brunole@juno.com](mailto:brunole@juno.com)

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**FOR SECRETARY: Don Hamilton, Life Member #201, Tuy Hoa 69 - 70:**



After a great deal of consideration and encouragement from VSPA members, I have decided to run for the position of Secretary. I have the qualifications, experience, dedication and time to serve as your VSPA Secretary.

The Secretary has many responsibilities including officiating in the absence of the President and Vice President, serving on the Board of Directors and is a member of several standing committees, as well as record maintenance. My experience in both public and private organizations makes me uniquely qualified to be the Secretary of our VSPA.

I have been a Life Member, #201, since 2005 and have served as a member of the Electronic Voting Committee.

**Qualifications and experience:**

Family-Married (Missy) Elaine in 1967. Two sons

**Federal Government Service-**

US Air Force; 1968-1972; E-5 1970

US Postal Service; retired 2003 as Manager, Customer Service.

**Public Service-**

President, Central Arizona Health System Agency

President, American Postal Workers Union, Phoenix Local

Member, Arizona State Health Planning Agency

Member, Arizona Statewide Health Planning Commission

Life Member, Disabled American Veterans

Life Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Member, American Legion

**“Together we can make a difference in our VSPA.”**

Sincerely,

Don Hamilton

[achilldigger@cox.net](mailto:achilldigger@cox.net)

**FOR TREASURER: Richard Garcia, Life Member #82, Phan Rang 69 - 70:**



Born in Puerto Rico, grew up in Brooklyn, New York.

Enlisted in the United States Air Force in April 1967.  
Basic Training at Lackland AFB.

Security Police Tech School and Combat Prep Course at  
Lackland AFB 04/67 to 07/67.

After Lackland, I went to Francis E. Warren AFB, Cheyenne,  
WY 07/67 to 01/69 guarding Minuteman Missiles/Nuke  
Warheads.

I served at Phan Rang AB, RVN in the 35<sup>th</sup> Security Police  
Squadron 02/69 to 02/70, heavy weapons Tiger mortar pit  
from sundown/sunrise.

I completed my service commitment with the 370<sup>th</sup> SPS  
Bangor, Maine.

Honorably discharged 04/71.

Currently a Billing/Collections manager with the Episcopal Church, responsible for over 4,000 accounts payable and accounts receivable with an estimated monthly premium cash value of over **\$20,000,000.00**.

Military Associations:

Vietnam Security Police Association (VSPA) Life Member #82

VFW

American Legion, Massapequa Post 1066

DAV Life Member

Vietnam Veterans of America

Sincerely,

Richard Garcia

[cal400@optonline.net](mailto:cal400@optonline.net)

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**FOR HISTORIAN: Kelly Bateman and Russ Stabler (Listed alphabetically):**

**FOR HISTORIAN: Kelly Bateman, Life Member #118, Ubon K-9 70 - 71:**



Born and raised in Garland, Texas. 60 years of age and retired from ATT after 21 years. Currently living in Wimberley, Texas, near San Antonio and married to my wonderful wife Vicki, who so kindly made the 38 guidons carried by the VSPA and Safeside in the 2007 Veterans Day Parade in Washington D.C.

USAF (68-70). Security Police OJT K9 Handler Det. 193 Incirlik AB, Turkey (USAFE).

Sentry Dog School, Wiesbaden AB. Germany, March, 1969.

Security Police Sentry Dog Handler 8<sup>th</sup> SPS, Ubon AB, Ubon Thailand (70-71), (PACAF).

Security Police K9 handler and K9 training NCO, Dyess AFB, Abilene, Texas (SAC) (71-72).

VSPA Life Member # 118.

VDHA Life Member # 1066.

Life Member VFW Post 6441, Wimberley, Texas.  
Life member NRA.

Currently an active member of the Civilian Emergency Response Team and SAR under the Department of Homeland Security for Hays County, Texas.

I am a Founding member of Nemo's War Dog Hero's Memorial Committee, Lackland AFB, Texas. Our Committee raised funds and, by using old photos and historical documents, completely restored USAF Sentry Dog Nemo's kennel at the present 37<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Law Enforcement Kennel at Lackland. We also placed a granite monument to commemorate Nemo and the 1968 TET attack on Tan San Nhut AFB, RVN, where he saved his partner's life. The USAF has recently declared Nemo's Memorial an official historical site at Lackland.



As the current VSPA Historian, and due to my ongoing working relationship with the Security Forces Museum at Lackland because of the Nemo War Dogs Memorial, I visited with the Director of the Museum in July of this year regarding another memorial project. We met to discuss the USAF Security Forces Museum fund raising project for their "WALL OF HONOR" to honor all USAF Air Policemen, Security Policemen and Security Forces members who have been killed in action, or were medal recipients of the Air Force Cross, Silver Star, Airmen's Medal, Bronze Star with "V" and the Purple Heart from 1946 to present. During that same period, I also chaired a group of four other VSPA volunteer members when we spent one week at the 37<sup>th</sup> Training Wing, Lackland AFB, on a USAF project to document and catalog historical documents and photos from the DOD K9 Training Center. The documents were found during preparation for demolition of several of the older buildings. The Air Force had no funds available to save or preserve them. The documents are now preserved and will eventually be transferred to the Security Forces Museum.

I have an extensive USAF Security Forces memorabilia collection that includes uniform patches, uniforms, posters, signs, head gear, K9 gear, photographs, etc. I am currently serving out the unexpired term of our VSPA Historian Don Graham and if elected would be proud to follow in his footsteps.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Bateman  
[texask-9@swbell.net](mailto:texask-9@swbell.net)

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**FOR HISTORIAN: Russ Stabler, Life Member #319, Ubon 72 - 73**



I was born October 25, 1948 in Williamsport, PA to Rebecca and Hiram Stabler. In 1967, I graduated From Danville Area Sr. High School and started my enlistment in the Air Force.

October 67 to November 67 I was assigned to 3702 BMTS at Lackland AFB.

November 67 to January 68 I was assigned to the Air Police/Security Police School at Lackland.

68 - 70 I was assigned to Det. 3 26th TAC Recon Wing at Bad Soellingen CAFB as a Custodial Agent protecting US war making resources.

70-72 I was assigned to FE Warren AFB, Wyoming in the Missile Field where I performed duties as a SAT team Leader, CAT Team Leader SET/CAT Dispatcher, and SP Leader on strategic weapons movements. During this period I attended the 15th AF NCO Leadership School, graduating in the top 30% of the class.

72-73 I was assigned to UBON RTAFB, Thailand. Here I performed duties as perimeter guard and SRT Team leader for Tiger Flight. After 4 Months I was assigned to the Day shift as the Sector Supervisor for Alpha Sector for the base.

73-80 I was assigned to Langley AFB, VA. Here I performed duties as entry point guard to sensitive areas, SAT team leader on the Flight Line, moved into the Weapons storage as the Alarm Monitor/ Alt CSC, then duties in CSC and as the flight trainer. In this capacity I was able to take the QC pass rate from 30% to 98%. Because of this and my ABGD identifier, I was assigned to teach ABGD to members of my flight.

80-87 I was assigned to Grand Forks AFB, Grand Forks, North Dakota in the missile Squadron. I was assigned duties as the SET/CAT Flight Supervisor. While performing these duties I was assigned by the NCOIC of SET/CAT to teach ABGD and Tactics to the entire 322 MSS including the Flight Commanders and Officers. Upon completion of this assignment, I was moved to Fire Teams as a Flight Chief. After a year and a half I was assigned duties on a TAD to the Correctional facility for 180 days. Reassigned to the 322 MSS, I was assigned duties as the Senior Security in Wing Security Control, and moved over to the Training Section as the Squadron Training Manager.

During my career, I completed all upgrade training through the 09 Level. As stated, I completed NCO Leadership School, AZR and OZR training and the Managers Training Class. While in the service, I completed an Associates Degree in Civil Engineering and an Associates Degree in Forestry Management. Upon retirement from the Air Force, and while performing security supervisor work at a corporate office, I went to the University of North Dakota graduating in 1992 with a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master degree in Modern European History with and Asian minor. Also, while attending UND in my last three years I

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was the Student Representative to the Teaching Department, Student Liaison for the Bridges Committee and recipient of the UND Memorial Leadership Award.

Since then I taught Middle School, retiring from teaching to start my own two companies. I have held positions as Historian, Chaplin, 2nd Vice Commander and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander in the American Legion in Fargo, North Dakota.

I also started the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 941 in Fargo and was the first Chapter Commander for two years.

Decorations include Air Force Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Award, Good Conduct Medal with four O/L clusters, Outstanding Unit Citation with three O/L Clusters, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and Thai wings from the Thai Government.

Sincerely,  
Russ Stabler  
[Pa1kid@aol.com](mailto:Pa1kid@aol.com)

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR BALLOT



# VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION BALLOT

**COPY, CUT OR PRINT THIS BALLOT**  
**MAIL TO: PHIL CARROLL**  
**VSPA MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN**  
**P.O. BOX 8**  
**GLADSTONE, OREGON 97027**



**PRINT OR TYPE CAREFULLY**  
**SO THAT WE CAN VERIFY YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND ADDRESS**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First M.I. Nickname

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE AND ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

### INSTRUCTIONS

If you are attending the reunion, you may only vote one time. You may mail-in your ballot, or you may wait to meet the candidates and submit your ballot at the reunion. All others must mail their ballot. **PRINT, CUT OR COPY THIS PAGE.** Please complete this ballot and mail to Phil Carroll with a **postmark no later than October 3, 2008.** Circle the name of the candidate below

#### FOR PRESIDENT

Newell Swartz

#### FOR VICE PRESIDENT

Hector Ramos

#### FOR SECRETARY (Vote for one)

Bruce Hadley

Don Hamilton

#### FOR TREASURER

Richard Garcia

#### FOR HISTORIAN (Vote for one)

Kelly Bateman

Russ Stabler

## Vietnam Security Police Association 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion Albuquerque, New Mexico – October 15-19, 2008

The reunion will be held at the **Marriott Hotel Pyramid North**. Room Rates are only \$109 a night, plus tax. The rate is good for three days before and three days after the reunion. Parking is FREE. When you check-in at the VSPA Registration Area in the hotel, you will receive a welcoming package with reunion security identification, a commemorative reunion pin, a detailed itinerary, a list of attendees and local information. The following itinerary and meals have been arranged for you and are included with your registration fee of \$155:

- ~ *Reception dinner buffet with beer and wine, Wednesday Evening, October 15<sup>th</sup>*
- ~ *All day tour and lunch at Kirtland Air Force Base, Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>*
  - ~ *Banquet Dinner, Friday Evening, October 17<sup>th</sup>*
  - ~ *VSPA Business Meeting, Saturday Morning, October 18<sup>th</sup> 0830 to 1130*
  - ~ *SAFESIDE Business Meeting Saturday Afternoon October 18<sup>th</sup> 1230 to 1500*
- ~ *VSPA Sisterhood Gathering of wives and companions Saturday Morning, 0900 to 1130*
  - ~ *Memorial Service, Sunday Morning, October 19<sup>th</sup>*
  - ~ *Commemorative 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion QC Pin*
  - ~ *Hospitality Room stocked with snacks & beverages*
  - ~ *All associated taxes and gratuities*

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS:** Call the Marriott Pyramid North at 800-266-9432 or 505-821-3333 no later than September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to make your hotel reservations. You may also use the following link to make your reservations on line: <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/vspa>

**OPTIONAL TOUR FRIDAY:** Highlights of Albuquerque & Sandia Aerial Tram Friday 9 am – 3 pm \$38. Begins with a guided tour of the city where you will see why Albuquerque is known as one of most culturally diverse cities in the country. The rich ethnic tapestry is reflected in its architecture and artwork. Countless customs and traditions passed down over generations are a vibrant part of daily life in the city, making it an epicenter of authentic Southwestern culture. Next you will take a 2.7-mile ascent to the 10,378-foot peak of the Sandia Mountains as you are whisked gently over the canyons and lush forests that lie beneath. During the day you might see mule deer, black bears or bobcats roaming the forest beneath you, while hawks, golden eagles and even the occasional hang glider coast through the air. There are shops and a restaurant at the top.

**OPTIONAL TOUR SATURDAY:** Atomic Museum, Old Town Shopping and Dinner Saturday 3-9 pm \$51. The National Atomic Museum is the nation's only Congressionally chartered museum of nuclear science and history. It is an intriguing place to learn the story of the Atomic Age, from early research of nuclear development through today's peaceful uses of nuclear technology. After visiting the museum, there will be **some free time for shopping before going to the La Placita Restaurant for an authentic New Mexican Dinner.**

**COME JOIN US AS WE SHARE OLD MEMORIES AND MAKE NEW ONES!!!  
PLEASE USE THE REGISTRATION FORM TO REGISTER FOR OUR REUNION.**

**If you have questions, please call VSPA President Steve Gattis at (254) 898-2647  
or send e-mail to [SGattis-LM49@vspa.com](mailto:SGattis-LM49@vspa.com)**

Or

Contact: The Reunion BRAT

Phone: (360) 663-2521

Email: [Info@TheReunionBRAT.com](mailto:Info@TheReunionBRAT.com)

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## AGENT ORANGE AND PROSTATE CANCER

Yes, this message was in the last issue of Guardmount. It is too important not be something that we talk about on a regular basis. What are the odds that you could have prostate cancer? The odds are high because of our age and are even worse because of our exposure to Agent Orange. Vice President Hector Ramos and Secretary Bruce Hadley have both revealed to our membership that they had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. They have successfully fought the disease and made a plea to our members to make an appointment for a physical exam for prostate cancer. They specifically advised our members to schedule a digital rectal exam of the prostate and a PSA Blood Test. **BOTH TESTS** are necessary in order to have the best possible chance of early diagnosis. A brief survey of those present in our 2006 and 2007 business meetings revealed that several members had never been tested. We want your family members to encourage you to be tested. Bruce and Hector gave a heartfelt explanation of symptoms, testing and diagnosis with strong encouragement to everyone to make the appointment. Now, what are the odds that one year after our first presentation, another elected officer, Don Graham, would be diagnosed with prostate cancer? Don Graham was diagnosed after he had a PSA test.

**EARLY DIAGNOSIS CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR AN EXAM!**

\*\*\*\*\*

## DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?



His name is Sgt. Robert "Bob" Rodriguez. He served as a Security Policeman at Tuy Hoa from 5 October 68 to 5 October 69. After his four-year hitch in the Air Force, he became a civilian police officer and rose to the position of Chief of Police for a small agency in Kansas. He passed away from Agent Orange complications a few years ago and never knew about the VSPA.

Bob Rodriguez has a son, Jeremy, who is also a police officer in Kansas and is looking for anyone who might have known his Dad in the Air Force, especially at Tuy Hoa. Jeremy sent this photo of his Dad, who is his hero, after he found us on the Internet. He contacted me as one cop to another to see if we had any information about

Tuy Hoa and his Dad. I sent him the squadron history for the 31st Security Police Squadron and told him how to request a copy of his Dad's military records. Kelly Bateman found a duty roster in our files listing him as a member of Tiger Flight working on the night of February 11 & 12, 1969. Now, Jeremy is looking for stories, anything that would help a fine young man know more about his Dad. If you served with Robert Rodriguez, please contact Jeremy at the address below. He would love to talk with you and would be eternally thankful to know more about his Dad. His email address is LY116AM42042003@yahoo.com.

Jeremy Wilkerson  
604 Chestnut  
Peabody, KS 66866  
Phone: 620-947-4182

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## John Homa, U-Tapao K-9

The Air Police/Security Police/Security Forces Shield Shadow Box was won at the VSPA Reunion in Washington D.C. by Robin Rossiter, wife of Jim Rossiter. Jim and Robin had to leave early for home and were not present when the winning ticket was drawn. Robin tried to keep it a secret from Jim until his birthday in December, but when Jim saw the mail carrier backing into the drive with a large package in the trunk it was kind of hard to hide. He was truly shocked to see the prize.



Jim started his 20 year Air Force career in January of 1955 with basic training at Sampson AFB, Geneva, NY. His first assignment was at Westover AFB as an Air Policeman. He had assignments in Goose Bay Labrador, Turner AFB in Georgia, and George AFB in California before moving on to Wheelus AB in Tripoli, North Africa for 2 years. Then, from the heat to the cold for 4 years he was stationed at Grand Forks AFB, ND. In 1966 he was transferred back to Westover. His next assignment was training at Schofield Barracks with the 822nd CSFS, SAFESIDE. From there he went with the 822nd to Vietnam. After a tour at Seymour Johnson, Westover again and Guam, he spent a year at NKP, Thailand. He retired as a MSgt. from all places, Westover in 1975.

After his military service he worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs for 30 years. He and Robin live in Pennsylvania and have 5 children and 14 grandchildren. Jim told me that after 20 years in Air Police and Security Police he never got to keep any of the shields he wore while on duty. I cannot think of a better person to have receive the Shield Shadow Box.

Members of the Thailand Handlers Group were able to raise just over \$4,000.00 for the two charitable funds, the “Nemo's War Dog Hero's Memorial Foundation” and the “Old Dawgs and Pups Program.” More info on these worthwhile charities can be found on the following web pages:

<http://sentrydognemo.com> and [http://www.pbase.com/635thk9/old\\_dawgs](http://www.pbase.com/635thk9/old_dawgs)

Thank you to all those who supported the project. John Homa

## FLASHBACK AT LACKLAND

By Ernie Childers, Bill Cummings and Kelly Bateman

On July 17, 2008, VSPA members Ernie Childers, Kelly Bateman, Bill Cummings, and VDHA President Fred Dorr were at Lackland AFB working on a K-9 project for the USAF. Because it was Ernie's birthday, our Air Force sponsor treated us to a tour of the kennels at Medina Base during one of our breaks.

As we drove toward Medina the scenery began to look very familiar and Ernie said, “Make a right turn and we are here”. It was like stepping back in time; the place hasn't changed a whole lot either which made it even easier to recognize. We walked up the steps to the Vet Clinic and out of old habit – we almost announced “dog coming in” as we entered the office. Walking through the kennel area there seemed to be a few more trees than

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we remembered. Ernie remembered the back of the Vet Clinic where we prepared the dog food on the back dock to feed our dogs.

We drove around a bit in the training areas and we saw the mesquite trees where we staked out our dogs during the heat of the Texas days. Driving around to the back side of the Kennel Ernie took a photograph from “Phoo Hill”. It was flashback time again as we saw ourselves exiting the back gate and heading up the hill to let my dog do their business and then started the days’ training. Man, it seems like yesterday!

During our visit we found out that the students of the Basic Dog Handlers course now have to fall out in training in full battle dress. Man that has got to be hot! We noticed that one of the students had a Thai Flag on his uniform. I don’t think the guy had time to even say “What the heck is going on” because we were all over him so quickly. He immediately was greeted with numerous “Sawadee’s”, handshakes, and other greetings in broken “Thai” from me, Kelly and Bill who were stationed at Udorn, Ubon, and U-Tapao respectively during the 70’s.

Our Thai language was a little rusty, but you can count on it – this handler knew we had spent time in his country. One of his classmates declared “Man, you’re a star” as our hosted introduced us as handlers from the Vietnam era. It was quite the thrill to see that Thailand flag and to finally get the chance to welcome one of their K-9 handlers. We all wished we had more time to visit - but you guys know Lackland and Medina - training must go on!





## Hall of Honor - An Up and Coming Exhibit at the USAF Security Forces Museum Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas

Submitted by Kelly Bateman – Udorn K-9 1970-71

The USAF Security Forces Museum is in the process of upgrading its **Hall of Honor** exhibit. Much of the content will be taken from existing exhibit themes and will elaborate by adding an interactive computer station designed to enable visitors to search various fields for biographies and photographs (when available) on Security Forces killed in the line of duty.

To date we have artist renderings and a model of how the new exhibit will look. These were prepared by the Lackland AFB MultiMedia Center. The ten walls that currently serve as the Hall of Honor will each focus on selected themes. The exhibit will have introduction labels, a wall for the highly decorated medal recipients, medal recipients, SF killed in the line of duty, an interactive computer station, a large screen for showing relevant media material with seating area, a donor recognition space, and related memorabilia.

Although a formal budget proposal has not been prepared we are moving forward with the help of several SF retirees. The exhibit upgrade of the **Hall of Honor** is expected to cost approximately \$14,000 and the Security Forces Museum Foundation has agreed to raise funds in support of this exhibit upgrade.

An opening date for the exhibit will be dependent on available funding.

For additional information please contact "Milita" Rios-Samaniego, Museum Director/Curator at the Security Forces Museum by email at [maria.rios-samaniego@lackland.af.mil](mailto:maria.rios-samaniego@lackland.af.mil) or by telephone at 210- 671-0809. Thank you for your support.



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Front Entrance to the Security Forces Museum at Lackland Air Force Base

## Thailand & Laos November 2006

By Alan Ashbaugh – 8th SPS - Ubon 1970-1972

In 1970 I was an OJT dog handler assigned to the 22nd Security Police Squadron at March AFB outside of Riverside, California. When I received my orders for Ubon RTAFB I had no clue where Thailand was or what part of the world it was in. Greg Gines & Art Mooney had just arrived at March about the same time having just returned from their tour at Ubon and filled me in.

After completing AZR I arrived at Ubon in mid September 1970. I had just made E-4 and was ready for a new adventure. After the usual in-processing and assignment to K-9, I began working with Smokey on the various K-9 post at night. After a few months I knew I wanted to extend my year at Ubon and so I did. About that time I took over the handling of Rebel. He had started out as a sentry dog, retrained to patrol dog and had been started in training for Marijuana detection. We did that as a team for approximately 18 months before I left in August of 1972. It was tough leaving your best friend behind.

During my time at Ubon, I spent a lot of time with the Thai guards assigned to K-9. I really enjoyed being around and with the smiling people. It is not called the "Land of Smiles" for nothing. I knew I wanted to return someday in the future.

After getting out of the Air Force and several years of getting a career started, my wife Ellen and I were fortunate to have our daughter. At about the same time a neighbor down the street also had a little girl. The two mothers became friends and eventually I met Gene Hamner, the husband. We discovered right away we had been in Thailand at the same time. Gene was an OV-10 pilot at NKP in 70-71 and later a Raven Fac in Laung Phrabang, Laos. In 1999 he and his family went to Laos and spent New Years in Southern Thailand. We began to planning in 2004 for our trip in November 2006.

We left San Francisco on November 1st at 10 minutes after Midnight and after a two-hour layover in Taipei, we arrived in Bangkok at about 11:00 AM on the 2nd. Don Maung Airport is no longer in use. Bangkok was like a whole new world after 34 years. Everything has changed and, for the most part, is beautiful. After a couple of days in Bangkok we took the night train to Ubon. The train station is the same as back in '71 when I last took the train. We left Bangkok at 9 PM and arrived at Ubon at 6:30 AM. The train station didn't seem to have changed much and crossing the Mun River was the same. From there on what a change! I didn't recognize much of anything until we pulled into the Ubon Hotel. The hotel looked like time had stood still. I don't think it had seen fresh paint since '72. For old times sake, we stayed at the Ubon. What a mistake! The air conditioning didn't work and the hot water never got more than luke warm. We went out to the Air Base but were not able to get on for a tour. Ubon still has an active Thai Air Force Squadron there and there was no way they were going

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to let us in. On the east side of the base (aero port side) there is a new Ubon international airport.

The road out at the main gate and then down a block on the main road into town is now a six lane busy highway. We found a taxi driver who said he knew where the dog kennels were, but after two hours and numerous stops no one seemed to know where they had been, or where the off base bomb dump and the refugee camp that was supposed to be at the old bomb dump were located. We did eventually get to the Thai Police dog kennels where they gave directions to the Thai Air Force dog kennels. The best I could surmise was that the kennels are near the old back gate where we left base to go to our kennels. They had kennels for ten dogs and had five dogs there. Three of the dogs looked like they needed to be put down. All were bomb dogs and the healthiest looking was a black Lab. The area was totally surrounded by jungle. The Sergeant-In-Charge had no clue as to where the American kennels had been.

The next day we took the bus to Chong Mek, the border crossing to Laos. I now have a photo of me at the border crossing into Laos to go along with my 1971 photo. We then spent the next 12 days in Pakse, Vientiane, Laung Phrabang, Plain of Jars, Laos. We crossed the Friendship Bridge back into Thailand and were picked up by a prearranged driver and taken to Udon.

After checking into our Hotel, we had our driver take us out to the Air Base. Udon is still an active base. Gene told the Security Police Captain in charge that he had worked with Air America. After a couple of phone calls the Assistant Wing Commander came out to the main gate and gave us a tour. We were only allowed to take photos in certain areas since it is an active base. We were shown the old Air America headquarters area and took photos inside. We were also allowed to photo some old Hangers that are still in use.

I then asked about the dog kennels because Ernie Childers had given me directions. The Assistant Wing commander said that they had been torn down long ago. He took us to the Thai Air Force kennels and I instantly knew he was wrong and I had never even been there before! The kennel office, kennel building, loading ramp, etc., were exactly as they had been at Ubon. Once inside there was no question. The actual kennels have been removed on one side and is an open bay. The other side is all kennels, but only four dogs were present. I gave a generic K-9 coin to a handler there and a VSPA coin to the Sergeant-In-Charge at the main gate. You would have thought I had just given him the Medal of Honor!

The next day our driver drove us down to NKP. I had been to NKP three times in my two years at Ubon. The road into town along the Mekong River has changed totally and has two five star hotels. The area around the Ho Chi Minh clock is pretty much the same except Monte's is gone. A trip out to the NKP airport found that the base is virtually gone. The old PSP runway is gone, having been replaced with concrete. The old tower is still there but has been replaced by a new one. Almost all the hangers are gone; only blacktop indicates there was something there at one time. On the opposite side of the main road, all of the buildings are gone, the jungle has overgrown everything. Pipes have even been dug out of the ground. Concrete walkways, culverts and planters can be found if looked for. Other than the asphalt streets that are getting narrower by the year, you would never know there was a base there.



From NKP it was back to Bangkok for a few days to relax before the long flight home. For me, the trip was a dream come true and well worth the time and expense. There were times when I felt like I had never left Thailand. If you make the trip don't expect too much to be the same because they're not. Of course, we're not in our early 20's anymore either.

Would I go back? In a heartbeat!!!

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## AFFILIATE MEMBER KIM BAYES GOT MARRIED!

For those of you who have met Kim at our reunions, you will be very happy to know that Kim got married on March 15th of this year. Her name is now Kim Bayes Bautista. She and her husband, Jamie, were married at Randolph Air Force Base and had a Security Forces Honor Guard, complete with sabers! The wedding was great and began with a vocalist singing "At Last." The reception was wonderful, too, and the Honor Guard loved the food. All but one of them had been to Iraq. They were sharp and looked great in their blues. They crossed sabers as Kim and Jaime walked from the chapel, then blocked their path until they kissed. As they passed the Tech Sergeant in charge of the guard, he gave her a swat with his saber, a tradition that Kim was completely unaware of. Jaime is a retired Army Sergeant First Class, was an Army Brat with Kim and her high school sweetheart in Zweibrucken, Germany!



OUR VERY BEST WISHES TO  
KIM AND JAIME!



Vietnam Security Police Association  
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Glen Rose, Texas 76043