



A Publication of the Vietnam Security Police Association

March 1, 2012

Spring 2012 Issue



GUARDMOUNT

VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION

"We Take Care of Our Own"



Photo by VSPA Affiliate member Sara Jaramillo

VSPA's own, President Emeritus Steve Gattis, speaks at the site of the MWD Memorial. Remarks pgs. 3-6.



Photo by VSPA Member Steve Hall



Photo courtesy of March Field Air Museum

War Dog Memorial -- Left: Air Force SSgt Van Arb and his MWD, Tosca, pause at the March Field Air Museum's War Dog Memorial on Feb. 18, 2012, during the museum's 12th Annual War Dog Remembrance Day. Military members and their working dogs participated in the event and was attended by many VSPA members and their families.
March AFB, Riverside, CA



2012 ELECTION OF VSPA OFFICERS—pgs. 14-15



President's Corner

By Phil Carroll, President VSPA

Well my brothers and friends, the VSPA is still carryin' on rather well. Our newly created position of Communications Director (populated by the not-so-new person of the hard working Don Poss) has accomplished another couple of major restructurings of the software and hardware supporting our vitally important website, membership database and online BX store. As usual, Associate Member Larry Poss was integral to all the changes and the eventual success of Don's efforts.

The BX store, while dealing with some web-related teething issues, as well as moving and change-of-management workload, is coming back toward full function - thanks to the huge time and effort investment of the whole Digby family (and I've lost count of how many Digbys are donating time and energy to returning our access to all the goodies).

I believe we've gotten the brand new Life Member ID cards to all the LMs we can find, although a few guys have dropped off our radar and haven't been located yet. We're all really proud to have finally completed that long-term project, and we will continue to try to find guys whose addresses, phone numbers and emails are no longer working.

Don't miss the information in this issue about the upcoming reunion - although we don't have all the information together yet we have enough to help you plan your trip and get started on reservations. The rest of the info will follow as soon as we can possibly put it together and get it to you. (See page 13)

Also don't miss the call for those of you who might be interested in running for an office on the VSPA Board of Directors. This year it's time again for our every-two-year elections, which will be finalized at the October reunion. Information on the duties of the positions and how to put your name in are in this issue of Guardmount, pages 14-15.

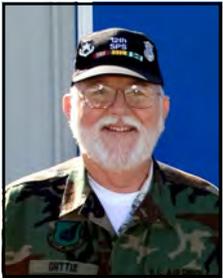
On that topic, I will not be running for a second term as VSPA president. I've got some new health issues and other personal stuff that simply prevents me from seeking another term. It hurts me a lot to have to tell you this, but it's necessary. I can't thank you all enough for the acceptance and confidence you gave me by letting me serve as membership chair for four years and president for two. This has been the best thing I've ever done. I haven't accomplished some of the things that I had in my sights when I signed on for the job of president, but I'm very satisfied with some of the things I've helped with as opportunities popped up. It's been an incredible honor to represent all of you at various venues, and an honor as well as a pleasure to speak to you from my heart at our reunion.

I will remain on the board, automatically replacing Newell Swartz as "Past President," and I will do all that I can to support the next president and board of directors. You are my brothers, and I thank you for everything that each of you has added to my life.

Welcome Home!

Phil Carroll - LM #336
Takhli, Nakhon Phanom 70-71: Tina X768, Charlie 2M45





War Dog Memorial

March Air Force Base Museum

Riverside, California ~ February 18, 2012

Remarks by Steve Gattis, VSPA President Emeritus

Good morning. It is my honor to be here today as we honor the memory of the military working dogs and their handlers. I attended the original dedication of this memorial in February, 2000, and recall the number of WWII handlers who were present, as well as those from Korea, Vietnam and Thailand. Many of my brothers from the Vietnam Security Police Association were also here. . . as they are today.

Like them, we are engulfed in memories of our personal association with these dogs, and remember when a K9 Night Fighter would step out of the night to make himself known. . . just as it is depicted here.

As we think of the dogs from our past, I would like to focus your thoughts on the Military Working Dog Creed:

*I am a Working Dog;
 My eyes are your eyes, to watch you and to protect you and yours.
 My ears are your ears, to hear and detect evil minds in the dark.
 My nose is your nose, to scent the invader of your domain.
 And so you may live, my life is also yours.*

Those words were written by a human to pay tribute to a military working dog, to a friend and partner. The more we know about the dogs and their handlers, the more that we understand that it is no small wonder that handlers have also died protecting their devoted partners.

For those of us who have known these dogs, worked with them, have been protected by them and live today because of their devotion and courage, we can't help but look at this memorial, recognizing in the face of this dog, the faces of the dogs and partners we knew and loved long ago. We can't help but personify the dogs who listened to secrets in the night, shared C-Rations and the warmth of a poncho, gave a silent alert or stood in front of their handler to prevent them from walking into a tripwire, stepping on a mine or a snake. As someone who got too close at the wrong time, climbed a fence and still has the memory of a sentry dog's bite on the inside of his leg, I can tell you that they would attack anyone who came close.

Gina, Rico, Oscar, Glen, Tomy, Cora, and Luxi are military working dogs of today who have been trained far beyond the capabilities of a sentry dog. They search for explosives and narcotics, track suspects and work in a multifaceted environment that is so complex that it defies description to those who have not been there. These dogs have been deployed multiple times and not always with the same handler.



Photo by VSPA member Steve Hall



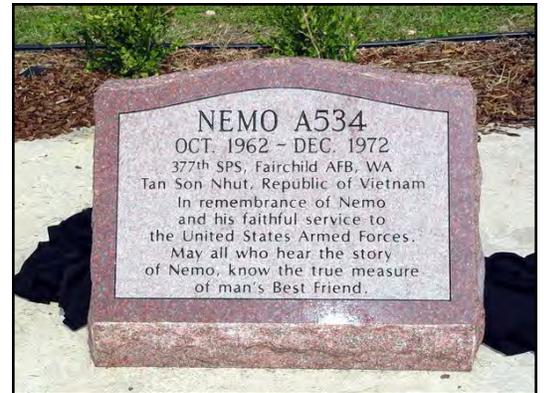
Photo by VSPA
 Affiliate member Sara Jaramillo

Several dogs have died while saving the lives of our troops. Many have been injured. Many are deaf due to explosions. One unique factor among all of these dogs is that they have been assigned a rank one level above their handler. And thanks to many of you, if they complete their service without debilitating injury or illness, all will eventually be retired in a manner fitting for a warrior, and hopefully be adopted into a family.

That was not the case during Vietnam and Thailand where military working dogs were considered a piece of equipment that could be disposed of in accordance with regulations for obsolete or worn out equipment. If they were lucky and responded well, they could be reassigned when their handler was killed, injured or returned home. In the end, for the dogs that were still healthy, very few were returned to the United States or sent to other bases. Most were left behind, given to the government of South Vietnam or Thailand, or put down.

As I look upon you, I can see the faces of friends who handled dogs named Blackie, Max, Brutus, Tina, Charlie and Duke. The list goes on and on with thousands of dogs that served with similar names and a unique service number that their handler will never forget. The handlers have their own memories, just as all of you who are here today, and have chosen to honor military working dogs and their partners through this memorial and the construction of other memorials throughout the United States, like Nemo's War Dog Heroes Memorial at Lackland Air Force Base, TX.

The memorial here at March honors Nemo and his handler, too. Many of you know Nemo's story, but for those of you who don't know, Nemo was assigned to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in the Republic of South Vietnam. He was handled by A/1C Robert Throneburg. In the predawn hours of 4 December 1966, several K9 alerted on a large force of Viet Cong that attacked the base using a single avenue of approach. Once inside the perimeter, they split into small groups to attack their targets. The men of the 377th Air Police Squadron fought the Viet Cong for seven hours. 13 Viet Cong were killed. Three Air Policemen: Bevich, Cole and Riddle and K9 Rebel were killed defending the base. Another 15 Air Policemen were wounded, including Throneburg and his dog, Nemo. Throneburg was wounded in the shoulder and Nemo was wounded in the muzzle area of his face, losing an eye. After being wounded, Nemo alerted on VC that had avoided earlier detection. Ignoring his serious head wound, Nemo threw himself at the VC guerillas, killing one. His ferocious attack gave Throneburg enough time to use his radio to call for backup forces and the enemy was neutralized.



Nemo's Memorial, Lackland AFB, TX

By the time the Quick Reaction Team reached Throneburg, Nemo had returned to protect his handler by crawling on top of him and saving his life. Throneburg recovered from his wounds. Nemo was also saved and returned to the United States where he was rehabilitated and then taken on tour by Captain Robert Sullivan. Nemo was an inspiration to many people who owned dogs and subsequently donated them to the Air Force. He remains an inspiration today as handlers from all branches of the military learn about him at the Military Working Dog School located at Lackland AFB, Texas.

I know that many of you have chosen to support military working dogs and their partners both here at home and throughout the world, wherever they may be posted or deployed. Feed the Dawgs is one of those programs that takes our memories of these dogs and turns them into a driving, positive force for good by allowing VSPA

members and former handlers like Jon Hemp, Ken Neal and many others to go to military working dog kennels so that they may take care of their own.



“Feed The Dawgs” co-founder Jon Hemp with Gold Star father Marine veteran Salvador Diaz Jr., place a wreath on the War Dogs Memorial Statue at March Air Force Base, Riverside, CA—February 18, 2012.



Photo by VSPA Member Steve Hall.

The motto of the Vietnam Security Police Association is “WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN.” We are a tax exempt organization that honors military working dogs, their handlers and their families by giving 100% of all corporate and personal donations identified for Feed the Dawgs DIRECTLY to the program without taking any portion of the funds for administrative fees or salaries. Like the volunteers from Feed the Dawgs who receive no salary, the officers and members of the VSPA receive no salary and work to fulfill their mission to preserve the history of our service in Vietnam and Thailand where no base protected by these wonderful dogs was ever taken by the enemy.

When you talk to troops about being deployed, you will often hear the words “DOWN RANGE”... meaning somewhere in a combat zone. There is a big difference in the definition of DOWN RANGE if you happen to have the opportunity to share some time with one of their military working dogs that has been trained for a specific mission and assignment that is vital to the safety of everyone on a patrol or base, wherever that base, post or patrol may be.

Military working dogs have a way of letting you know that DOWN RANGE is wherever they are. They need for you to know that they are DOWN RANGE right now. . .that DOWN RANGE isn't some combat zone and it isn't just the perimeter of their post; it is as far as they can see, hear or smell.

If you look at the dogs that are here with their handlers today, know that as far as they are concerned, they are down range right now, ready to intelligently respond to a command, ready to attack what they perceive as a threat, instantly willing to face danger without regard to themselves, and willing to sacrifice their lives for the partners who care for them. And the moment you think that down range is in some other location or country, the dog will remind you that you should never forget who you are and why you have been assigned to train and care for them. To be lucky enough to earn their devotion and have them protect you is beyond extraordinary; it is a life shared.

To illustrate that shared life, I will end by telling you about Rowdy. He was a dog from our time and was assigned to a base in Thailand during the war in Vietnam. He was dearly loved by his handler. While some dogs were reassigned to another handler, Rowdy was not. His life ended right after he worked his last night with his handler. It was toward the end of the war and Rowdy was considered excess equipment, no longer needed. He was not going to be left behind or transferred.

The following Ode to Rowdy was written by Kim Bayes-Bautista of the VSPA to honor his memory:

*For three decades, the words remained unspoken,
Of that day that a good man's heart was broken.
Rowdy was a pup from the Lone Star State,
Who protected our warriors from a sinister fate.
Rowdy was fearless, with a heart so pure,
Commissioned to defend and keep all secure.*

*To his handler, he was a lucky charm,
Teaching him to survive, and stave off harm.
Rowdy was much more than Man's best friend.
He was a tower of strength
on whom his handler could depend.
Tragically, Rowdy would become another victim,
Of Uncle Sam's cold, insentient system.*



VSPA Member Jon Hemp presents the remains of his retired and adopted USMC Military Working Dog, Condor H053, to the Marine Corps. Photo contributed by VSPA Member Steve Hall.

*As their tour ended, he was filled with dread,
Faced with knowledge of what lay ahead.
Rowdy could sense that his end was near,
But he accepted his destiny without fear.
It took a brave man to shovel the dirt,
Only God knew how badly he hurt.*

*The brave man loved his partner, he stayed by his side,
'Til he took his last breath, and a piece of the man died.
With soldier's honors, his handler laid him to rest,
With the Red White and Blue draped across his chest.
Now Rowdy sits high at Heaven's Gate,
As he awaits his friend, his earthly soul mate.*

We shall always remember our War Dogs. Thank you for being here today. And now, will all of the handlers please stand so that we can thank you for all that you have done for us.

THANK YOU AND WELCOME HOME.



Don Poss preparing to honor his K9 Partner Blackie during "Laying of the hands." Photo contributed by VSPA Member Steve Hall.

Attending the Memorial War Dog Event

by Larry Breazeale, Msgt., USAF (ret.) VSPA Life Member, AFSFA Board Member

Everyone, it was a great time! Beautiful day as well, weather wise. It was good to see Steve Gattis there, coming all the way from Texas to attend. Steve spoke on behalf of VSPA and its support of MWD teams past & present (and some good MWD 'history' in Vietnam too!) Steve's speech was excellent.

I got up to say a few words about the role of the Air Force Security Forces Association, its support for the USAF MWD Teams past & present and some reflections on that first day, back in Feb. 2000, for the "unveiling" of the War Dogs Memorial. THAT really was a very special day.

The real 'movers & shakers' at March Air Field Museum, JON HEMP with "Feed the Dawgs", and Mike Diaz (both AFSFA & VSPA & VVA members) and, of course, other veteran volunteers are to be congratulated ten-fold for their efforts.

Mike Diaz, LAPD Sergeant retired, has been very instrumental in making sure the USAF SECURITY POLICE story is told at the museum. Outside the hangar museum, is a mock Vietnam style airbase, with towers and bunkers, sandbags, and stationary aircraft used in Vietnam. The P.A. will soon give audio sounds from Vietnam and an outside picture screen of BIEN HOA airbase film footage. Inside the museum, is a SR71 Blackbird, guarded by a "SAC COP" (mannequin) shouldering an M-16 rifle. Inside the nearby museum "Chuck Yeager" Library, behind panel glass, is the USAF Air Police exhibit. Later on this March, the museum is hosting the "Moving Wall" near the War Dogs Memorial. If you live in the area and you want to help with the "security" of this "Moving Wall", while it is there, contact the museum staff. Plus, come on down and see some of YOUR heritage.

It was good to see Don Poss there, Tom Iverson & Roy Gallagher from San Diego, Steve Hall of course, and many others. I had a display/info table for VSPA, AFSFA, VVA, AFSA, and AFA for recruitment. Several USAF MWD Security Forces from Beale AFB, Creech AFB, and Vandenberg AFB came by. I will do a little write-up with photos for "TIGER FLIGHT" magazine on this great event. We will have a similar display/info booth at the upcoming March AFB AIRSHOW May 19 and 20, 2012. Drop by and say hello.



LARRY BREAZEALE
Photo by VSPA Member Steve Hall

DEFENSOR FORTIS!



Rick Hapeman and author, Barry McLean—2011

43 Years Later.....

by Barry McLean, Safeside Ranger—822nd Combat Security Police Squadron, VSPA Life Member #53, Phan Rang, Tuy Hoa, BanMeThuot

Forty three years ago, Rick Hapeman and I were on the same squad with the 822nd CSPA (Safeside). We both were to get early outs and came home on the same Freedom Bird. We flew in through McChord AFB and said our goodbyes at Seattle International Airport. We had no further contact until Rick found me on the VSPA Website a few years ago. He was living in Rochester, New York at the time. He has since moved to Leland, North Carolina. I live in the Hamilton, Ohio area. We email back and forth on a regular basis.

When I told Rick I was going to Myrtle Beach on vacation, he told me that he and his wife, Bev would love to meet us for lunch somewhere when my wife, Sarah, and I arrived in Myrtle Beach. I told him that I would let him know when we got there and figured out our schedule.

Rick suggested we meet at PF Chang's on the old air force base in Myrtle Beach on Wednesday, October 26th at noon. Plans made, Sarah and I arrived a little early and the hostess asked how many. We told her that there would be four, but that I may not recognize the guy because I hadn't seen him since we parted company after we came home from Vietnam. I told her the basic story, and she said it was fantastic and would mention it to the manager. When Rick and Bev arrived, I recognized the older version of the Ranger I had said good-bye to 43 years previously. After a hand shake and big hugs all the way around, we sat down to have lunch.

Our server said the hostess told him a little and asked about our story. He took our orders and left. Then the manager brought our food and asked about our story! He said it was a fantastic story of two soldiers being apart so long and then deciding to have a reunion at HIS restaurant. He told us that as a small token of his appreciation for our service and for "honoring" PF Chang for the reunion, PF Chang was "picking up the tab" and also added a delicious desert. Rick, Bev, Sarah and I were floored. We couldn't believe that a restaurant/manager would do that for two old soldiers who just wanted to see each other again. We have already decided that this will not be the last time that we get together.

IF ANY OF YOU GET TO MYRTLE BEACH AND HAVE LUNCH/SUPPER AT PF CHANG IN MYRTLE BEACH, TELL THEM THAT RICK AND BARRY SENT YOU. OUR SERVER WAS ALEX AND THE MANAGER WAS JEREMY. THEY DESERVE ALL THE BUSINESS WE CAN SEND THEIR WAY!

We Take Care of our Own" by Terry Morris

Life member 38 PR, 35th SPS - 1966-67 Membership Chairman 1994 to 2006

“We take care of our own!”

Words to live by for the Vietnam Security Police Association, but how did it come to be our motto? Let me tell a story that might explain.

After leaving Vietnam in 1966, I quickly returned to civilian life, giving little thought to 'Nam except for what I saw on the nightly news. A few years later, I did join a local VVA Chapter in Wisconsin, but there was only one other AF Vet that belonged and I didn't ride a Harley so my interest waned. After all, nobody ever heard of an AP and what we did anyway.



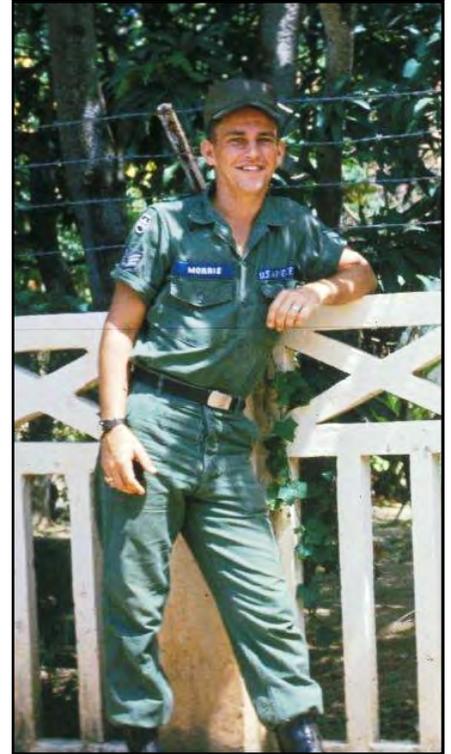
Nine year old Xin, 1966

Then in October of 1993 I received a letter and questionnaire from a Tom Mitchell in California. He was attempting to write a book about the Vietnam dog handler's experiences from all branches of service. Tom somehow thought I was K9 handler and how he found my name and address I don't know to this day. I told him I did not have a dog, but that we supplied back-up to the K9 at Phan Rang. Tom also contacted John Langley and the two later organized the VDHA.

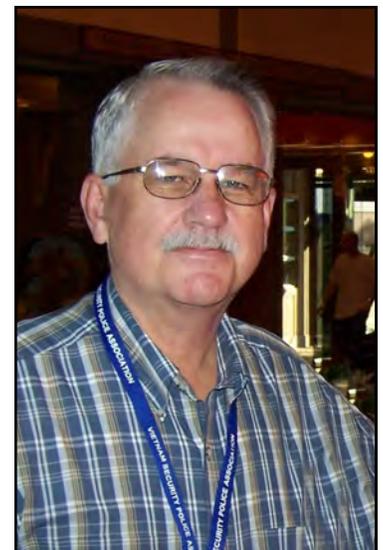
In November of 1994 I attended their first reunion in DC, and there it was where I met John. It was at the reunion that John and I decided to create an association for AP/SPs that served in Vietnam and Thailand. At that VDHA meeting it was also decided to hold their next reunion in San Antonio, TX. As an associate member, I could attend that reunion.

Sometime later, the location of VDHA's next reunion was changed, but by that time I had already talked my wife and daughter into going to San Antonio for a vacation. So we boarded Amtrak and 36 hours later we were in San Antonio. I think I made arrangements with Col. Bullock to visit Lackland AFB through my membership in AFSPA. When I arrived at the base a TSgt Garza, (not sure the name is correct) picked me up and escorted me to wherever I wanted to go on base. Of course, 32 years after basic and tech school, not many things looked like what I remembered. He even took me to the BX and used his ID to let me buy some souvenirs. Here was a career airman taking this one hitch airman on a tour and making me feel like a visiting General! When he dropped me off at the gate to catch my ride back to town, I thanked him with the most sincere Thank You I could muster. It was then he rendered a very sharp salute and said, “We take care of our own, sir!” It brought tears to my eyes.

Now I can't swear on my shield that's how the motto came to be, but I'm sure I told that story to the “Dirty Dozen” that attended that first VSPA reunion in Atlanta. The important thing is that now there are thousands more that know exactly what we did in Vietnam.



This picture of Terry was taken in 1966 by a 9 year old named Xin, pronounced Sin. He was a friend/guide that lived in Thap Cham. Terry said he had often wondered what happened to Xin. (left)



Terry Morris, 1996

633rd Security Forces Ball

Submitted by Steve Shelt, VSPA life member #157



The message below is from the Commander (LTC Scott Foley) 633rd SFS, Langley AFB, VA. He has invited all prior Vietnam 633rd SPs to join them at their second annual SF Ball. Pat Dunne and I along with our wives attended last year and were treated like part of their family. It would be great if as many 633rd VSPA members could attend as possible. I promise you it is well worth your time. LTC Foley is deploying to Afghanistan in July and this would be an opportunity to wish him well from his Vietnam counterparts.

(message from 633rd SFS)

Leaders and Security Forces Friends,

I would like to extend a personal invite to you to attend the 2012 Security Forces Military Ball on 19 May 2012 at the Hampton, VA Convention Center. This is a one of a kind event at which we will honor our fallen defender brothers and sister as well as honor our 2011 Security Forces Outstanding Performers. Our key note speaker is a Bronze Star recipient, a wounded warrior, a Combat Photographer and medically retired, SSgt Stacy Pearsall.

Please follow the link below for the formal invitation and RSVP.

<https://einventions.afit.edu/2012633SFSMilitaryBall/anim.cfm>

("Some web browsers may cause you to receive a warning that the Security Certificate for this web site is invalid or cannot be verified. That is because the site issues its own certificate, instead of purchasing one from a third party vendor. This site is perfectly safe and you can ignore the warning. However, if you receive warnings from other sites you visit, you should use caution and verify their legitimacy.")



Also, with the Embassy Suites next door to the Convention Center, if you are coming from out of town, we have blocked rooms for this event. If you are interested, please email SrA Stephanie Miller (Stephanie.Miller@langley.af.mil) or call her at 757-225-4729 and she can assist in getting your needs taken care of.



HOW QUICKLY THE YEARS HAVE PASSED

by Terry Sasek LM-687 Binh-Thuy AB, Nov. '68-Nov. '69

On October 5th, 2011 the eagles gathered once more
It was their 17th reunion since finding each other
These once strong and muscular warriors of Vietnam

Some were as fit as the day they had returned home
Some were now suffering from the ravages of time
Some were a shadow of the peacekeepers they were

And yes, many of us were now very old and heavy
With disabilities received from the aftereffects
From this herbicide sprayed called Agent Orange

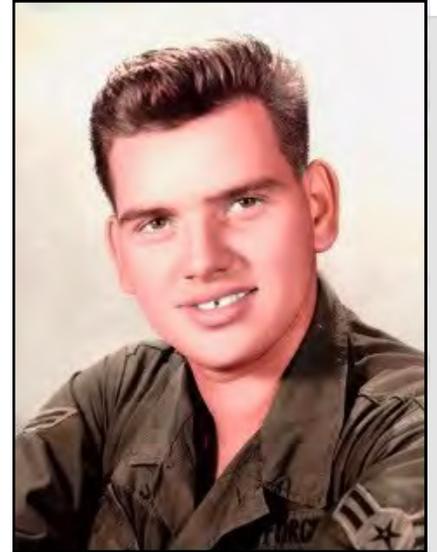
Regardless of all these facts, they still gathered
To remember our own 111 brothers lost in Vietnam
One mother and her son's former fiancée come yearly

We all call her Mom and we are her adopted sons
Her own son gave his life trying to save others
And we all have adopted Mom and Erlyce as well

Erlyce later married, but each year she comes too
Escorting Mom to each of these special reunions
Mom turned 90 yrs. old on this past Veterans Day

She and the other 110 are our Gold Star Mothers.
Those who have lost a son during the Vietnam War
Each year these warriors the survivors all gather

To remember them and to pay our respects to them.
They are forever young in Heaven and we are old
But time or our own health issues won't stop us



Terry Sasek, 1968

This was my very first reunion that I had attended
I will try to go to each one I can now in the future
It had felt so good to be reuniting with my brothers

And to be able to bring my wife, too, was very special
Because she got to meet those I had served with there
We had talked about everything, but little of the war itself

It's as though all that bitterness and that anger had left
And it was now replaced with the pride of who we were
And what we all had accomplished despite all the odds

It was 43 years ago in Nov. 1968 that I left for Vietnam
And on Oct. 5th, 2011, I had finally returned home at last
I am proud to have served as a member of this elite group.

To us and those like us, no matter which base you were at,
We'd all served our great nation in times of war and peace
We were young and we grew up so fast and became men .

We fought to defend freedom and we defended each other, too.
Many had died and many more still suffer from their wounds
And many still suffer illnesses they contracted while in Vietnam

We were brothers and we have always taken care of
our own
One thing is for certain as long as even one of us
remains alive
We will pay our respects and honor each and every one
of them

So if you have never yet attended one of our own
reunions,
Then I would encourage you to do so and bring your
wife too.
You can't possibly imagine what an thrilling experience
it is.



Terry and Ellie Sasek, Oct. 5, 2011

Photo by VSPA Member Steve Hall

Ramblings of an Air Force Brat...by Janet “Sparkplug” Parker

** Editors note: Janet, Sisterhood Vice President and daughter of Sgt. Al Matthews, USAF and VSPA LM 127, has been a contributing writer at GM for a little over a year. After writing four articles on surviving grief, Janet offers us reflections on what she has learned about love from grief.*



What I learned about love through grief...

I have written about my grief experience and lessons. Through that experience, I learned a great deal about Love...so my Post Valentine message to you is short meditation about love. There are so many definitions of love and so many ways to love.

One of my favorite rules of thumb about love is because He first loved. I cannot remember a time in my life that I was not fully, completely aware of the love given to me by my parents. It was that unconditional, never ending, unquestionable love. Even during that time in my life when I was certain their sole purpose of existence was to wreck my life and embarrass me publically...I still knew that all they did and all they wouldn't let me do was some how driven by that love.

I can remember how Sarge would beam, when as an adult, Mama and I would have a discussion that somehow wound around to “you are just like your father” and I would say “yes, but my Daddy loves me”.

Life happened and I found myself at that place of goodbye...when Sarge posted his last guardmount on January 4, 2008, the world did not feel safe anymore. I remember the “why’s” and “how could this be’s.” I also remember realizing that this was indeed God’s will, for given the choice, Alvin W. Matthews would never have voluntarily left his family because of his great love for us.

I have wonderful memories at the VSPA Reunions when he would reach out his hand to a brother and say welcome home. Those experiences showed me a whole different kind of love. The brotherly love born of common experience and common pain. The eclectic kind of love that veterans, I prefer Heroes, share with each other. That a group of such diverse individuals from across this country, of every race, creed, religion and background can gather together, putting aside all differences, and focusing on the only common denominator, a tour in Viet Nam, is surely the greatest example of “Love thy Brother” as I have ever seen.

I learned, very shortly after Daddy left us, what it is like to love someone enough to let him go. To know that the disease and the pain are too much. And any less than full release to the arms of the savior is a selfish, merciless act.

At that time, I learned the real meaning of Agape...the love the Father has for his children, in their joy and their pain. That He can take circumstances so dark and painful, and give insight and survival is a vivid demonstration of His love.

I also know that mercy and forgiveness are great testimony to loving each other. As Paul says, love covers a multitude of sins.

Now, I can say from my heart, I am still in the midst of all the love Sarge left, all the love Mama still has, the love of being newly wed, and the peace of the Love from the Light of the World.

All the grieving of a few short years ago brought me to this place. Grief is indeed a side effect of love. With great love comes great pain. I am blessed to know that because of great love, my heart will break again. I am more blessed to know that Greater Love will guide me through the pain and the darkness.

I wish for you days of hearts, flowers and chocolates. Of heartfelt friendships, great love with your significant other, unconditional love of your children and grandchildren. More than all these I wish you the love that will chase the darkness from your heart and light your path.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Cor. 13:13 NIV I could go on and on. But I know that your life experience has given you significant insight into many things. Perhaps we would benefit by your sharing your insights as well?

Love ya, really, really.

Janet

Vietnam Security Police Association
18th Annual Reunion
Fort Walton Beach, Florida – October 3 - 7, 2012
Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field, Florida

This is only partial information to help you plan your trip - more details to come soon.

The reunion will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel - Destin, Florida (www.embassydestin.com/). Our contract room rate is \$119 per night, plus taxes. The rate includes FREE breakfast each morning for each room occupant, and complimentary nightly managers reception. The room rate is good for three days before and three days after the reunion. Parking is FREE. You will have to specify your choice of a smoking or non-smoking room.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS: Call the Embassy Suites – Destin, Florida at **800-701-0767** to make your hotel reservations. You must tell them that you are attending the reunion of the Vietnam Security Police Association in order to receive our contract rate. If you prefer you can make your reservation on-line, at the following link: http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/D/DSIESES-VPA-20121003/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG

AIRPORT INFORMATION: Fly to “Northwest Florida Regional Airport” (airport code **VPS**), in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. We are working on getting some sort of shuttle discount, as the hotel does not have airport shuttle service. Stand by.

REUNION REGISTRATION: We do not yet have enough of the planning in place to know what registration will cost. We will have that information along with the registration form in the next issue of Guardmount.

AGENDA (generally accurate, but this is still subject to changes):

- Reception dinner buffet with beer and wine, Wednesday evening, October 3th
- Eglin AFB or Hurlburt Field Thursday, October 4th or Friday, October 5th
- Local area attractions, Thursday, October 4th or Friday, October 5th
- VSPA Board of Directors meeting, Friday afternoon, October 5th
- VSPA business Meeting, Saturday morning, October 6th
- VSPA Sisterhood gathering of wives and companions, Saturday morning, October 6th
- SAFESIDE Business Meeting, Saturday afternoon October 6th
- Banquet dinner with guest speaker, awards and raffle, Saturday Evening, October 6th
- Memorial service, Sunday Morning, October 7th
- Hospitality Room stocked with snacks & beverages will be open as much as possible.
- VSPA BX Store will be open as much as possible.

This information will allow you to get you a head start on your travel planning. Airfare costs seem to constantly go up, so early reservations could save you some money. The room rate is locked in for us, but there will be a deadline for that as well so it won't hurt to reserve your room early. Watch for the next issue of Guardmount for the rest of the details. We hope to see you at this 18th Annual VSPA Reunion!

2012 Election of VSPA Officers

The VSPA Constitution and By-Laws call for an open election of officers in which every current member is able to vote. As we did in 2008 and 2010, we'll have members in attendance at the reunion vote in person and all other current members will be able to mail in a ballot in advance of the reunion. Every current member will have the chance to vote, but only one vote per member of course.



There are six positions up for election: President, Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. The other positions on our board of directors (President Emeritus, Past President and Communications Director) are permanent positions as recognized by our Constitution and By-Laws. All other positions in the VSPA are staff positions appointed by the president and board based on their expertise and willingness to serve the members of the VSPA. Elected officers will be confirmed and installed after the voting is completed at the reunion in October. The term of office of all positions is two years. The positions do not receive a salary and are entirely on a volunteer basis.

VSPA members have until July 31 to declare their intention to run for an elected VSPA position. Each person who runs must have been a regular member or life member in good standing for at least two years prior to the election. Board members must have the ability to attend future business meetings that are held at our annual reunions. They must communicate via the Internet and by phone on a regular basis, and must make the commitment to provide the time necessary to serve in the position - none of these are ceremonial positions.

If you want to run for an office on the VSPA Board of Directors you'll need to submit a photo and biography similar to those which were published in the Fall 2008 and Fall 2010 issues of Guardmount by the guys who were seeking election at those times. Send your materials to VSPA's Guardmount Editor Erlyce Pekas electronically (erlyce@msn.com) or by surface mail (PO Box 22035, Phoenix, AZ 85028) soon enough that she receives your information by July 31, 2012. These materials and a ballot will be made available, or mailed, to all current VSPA members in time to allow everybody to choose their favorite candidates and submit votes.

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

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

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

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

- Assist the President in the discharge of his duties.
- Assume the duties of the President in the event of his absence, illness, or call to eternal Guardmount.
- Execute the powers and authority of the President, when required, in the absence of the President.
- Serve as elected members of the Board of Directors.
- Serve as Chairman and member of the Public Relations Committee.
- Serve as a member of the Scholarship Committee.

- Prepare & present annual reports relative to the operation of their respective office at the annual business meeting.
- Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to their care and turn over the folder to his successor.
- The Second Vice President shall provide oversight for all record keeping activities and assist the President by maintaining hard copy records.

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

- Officiate when required in the absence of the President and Vice President.
- Serve as an elected member of the Board of Directors.
- Serve as a member of the Membership Committee.
- Be the clerk of the organization.
- Be the custodian of all business related non-financial records and materials, which shall remain property of the organization.
- Keep permanent records of the proceedings of all annual meetings and meetings of the Board of Directors.
- Prepare and distribute election ballots, if necessary and as required.
- Ensure that only members in good standing vote on organizational business. The Secretary will be assisted by the membership Chairman and the Sergeant-at-Arms.
- Serve as official organization correspondent.
- Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to his care and turn over the folder to his successor.

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

- Serve as an elected member of the Board of Directors.
- Act as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee if the committee is necessary.
- Be the Chief Financial Officer of the organization.
- Be the custodian of all financial records of the organization.
- Receive and be responsible for the collection of all monies due and payable to the organization.
- Have custody of all organization funds, and shall provide for the safekeeping, retention, disbursement, and investment in a manner acceptable to the Board of Directors.
- Receive donations on behalf of the organization.
- Issue letters in acknowledgement of all donations as required by tax codes.
- To work with the President to make such reports and returns as are required by Federal, State and local governments, the Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution, and these By-Laws, including the disbursement of appropriate taxes and fees.
- Maintain accounts appropriate to the structure and activities of the organization and in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and principles.
- Keep a current folder that includes all official correspondence, records, and official materials assigned to his care and turn over the folder to his successor.

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

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



REPORT FROM LACKLAND: The 44th Anniversary of TET

Rededication of the Southeast Asia Section of the Security Forces Museum
By Steve Gattis, VSPA President Emeritus

January 30, 2012: There was heavy rain in the afternoon and evening while Security Forces Defenders were on post at The Moving Wall. It rained throughout the night. The Defenders were accompanied by one of our own, Ken Neal, a Security Police K-9 handler who worked an eight hour shift – at night – in the rain – while he thought of the long nights he had stood post with his K-9 partner, Max. He honored all of us as he gave challenge coins to the Defenders and told them about our brothers on The Wall. The Defenders asked about TET and he told them about his brothers who would come the following day for the ceremony to honor their fallen brothers.

January 31, 2012: The 44th Anniversary of TET 68. The sun rose in a cloudy sky. Somehow, the rain had stopped and a breeze had started to dry the parade field across from the Security Forces Museum. The final touches on the new Southeast Asia section of the museum were made while troops began to prepare the parade field for the guests who would arrive in a few hours. Defenders remained on post at The Wall, which was in place in a field adjacent to the parade ground. Members of the VSPA, AFSFA, Safeside and the 377th Associations started to arrive at Carter Hall for a tour of the Security Forces Academy and the Military Working Dog Kennels. The tour of the Academy and Kennels was outstanding and followed by a lunch at The Gateway Club. Some of the handlers who gave the tour and demonstrations were friends of the VSPA and had been supported by the Old Dawgs and Pups Program while deployed.

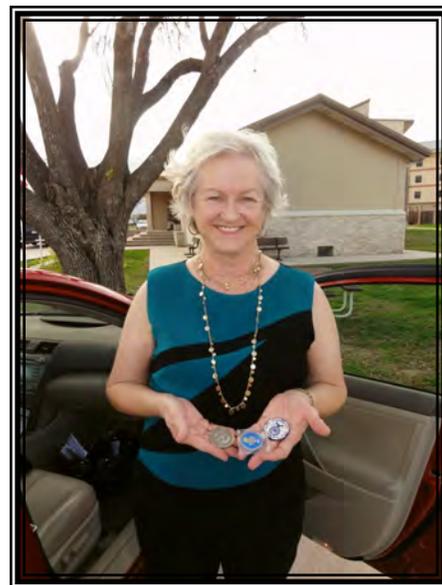


L to R: Mel Grover, ?, Gene Tucker, Terry Lynch, Pat Bowden, Don Segraves, Gary Bird, Bob Rodocker, Tom Tessier, Art Garcia, Walt Parsons, Frank Ybarbo, Dave Tolley, Lydia Mousner, Joe Torolski, Larry Blades, Bill Hargrave, ?, Bernie DeNisio, Richard Gannaway, Reuben Rayna, Jim Kelter, Jim Stewart, ?.

And somewhere while all of this was taking place on the vast base known as “The Gateway to the Air Force”, the grandson of VSPA Photographer and Life Member, Steve Hall, was in his very first formation as a “rainbow” airman who had arrived in the rain to begin basic military training.

1400 hours: Several members of the 377th Association gathered at The Wall to meet with Lydia Mousner, the wife of their fallen brother Charles Hebron who was killed in Bunker 051 during the attack of January 31st, 1968. She joined them as they placed a wreath at The Wall to honor Charles and his brothers, William Cyr, Louis Fischer, Roger Mills, Edward Muse and Reginald Maisey who also died that night 44 years ago. They remained for a group photo taken by Ken Neal.

1500 hours: Former Air Policemen and Security Policemen along with current Security Forces gathered on the parade grounds with the proud awareness of their shared brotherhood. The formation of Defenders was huge and located directly behind the 200 chairs where members of the VSPA, Safeside, AFSPA and the 377th Association gathered. Among the troops stood some highly experienced Security Forces NCOs who had come from all over the world for supervisory training. Retired TOP COP and VSPA member BG Richard Coleman was present among other dignitaries who had gathered in solemn silence to listen to Retired Colonel (then Captain) Bernie DeNisio speak about the attack on Tan Son Nhut, and Retired SMSGT (then SSGT) Pete Piazza speak about the attack on Bien Hoa. The Anniversary ceremony of TET and the ribbon cutting for the museum began with the presentation of our colors as the angelic voice of Security Forces CMSGT Leslie Thomas floated across the parade grounds carrying the sacred words of our National Anthem. Dignitaries were introduced with very special recognition for Lydia, the wife of Charles Hebron.



Lydia Mousner
Photo by VSPA Member Steve Gattis

Col. DeNisio spoke of the courage of all members of the 377th and asked those who were with him on the night of January 31st to stand. He recounted the events that lead to TET and explained the attack, all the while paying tribute to his men who saved the people and military units that were assigned to Tan Son Nhut. His voice broke several times as he talked of the attack and what his men endured while defending Bunker 051.

Our Pete Piazza spoke of his friend and hero, the quiet voice of calm on the radio during the attack, our own Lt. Col Kent Miller who was the Commander of the 3rd Security Police Squadron on the night of the attack and throughout TET. Pete gave a very thorough account of a terrible night at Bunker 10 and the attack on Bien Hoa Air Base, paying full tribute to the men of the 3rd Security Police Squadron and the heroism of Reginald Maisey and VSPA member Marshall Gott. Our eyes filled with tears as Pete’s voice broke, knowing that he was remembering a horrible event in a manner that would inspire the Defenders of today and remind them of the extraordinary brotherhood that we continue to share 44 years after TET 68.

Colonel Gregory Reese, Commander of the 37th Training Group, provided the closing comments as he made certain that his troops were standing at ease in their formation, while fully aware that that they needed to hear just a bit more about the future, telling them that although our experience in Vietnam and Thailand was the foundation of their training, they would face events in the future that would remind them of today. That they, too, no matter how hard they trained, should train with the awareness of TET, and just as the men in the audience fought with honor and never lost a base, they too would face events and think that they had not had enough training. His words flowed into the Airman's Creed and hundreds of voices behind us joined him, building to a crescendo at the end of the Creed where the Defenders shouted in unison, "I WILL NOT FALTER AND I WILL NOT FAIL!"

The ribbon cutting for the new section of the museum, Taps and a 21 gun salute concluded the ceremony in the traditional manner. Yet what really added to the tears and chills that ran through the collective body of Veteran Skycops, were the facing movements of several hundred Defenders who stood behind us, came to attention and executed a left face with the solid, unified sound of several hundred boots striking the ground as one so that they could face The Wall, the bugle player and the Honor Guard that fired the 21 gun salute.



VSPA's Pete Piazza stands with Bernie DeNisio & other military members



"Ahhhtennnht! Left Face!"



Pete Piazza helps cut the ceremonial ribbon

The combined honor of the event provided by the Air Force and the presence of several hundred Defenders was a wonderful tribute to those we lost so long ago.

Our entry into the museum was accompanied by the anticipation of what awaited us in the new section and memories of nights on post. We immediately encountered the smell of burlap sandbags from the bunker that had been built at the entrance to the Southeast Asia area of the museum. Skycops in the bunker, an M-60 in firing position, camouflage netting and murals of a perimeter behind the bunker depicted what we lived while on post during our time in Vietnam and Thailand. Sand and jungle foliage around the bunker, when coupled with the smell of the sandbags, all elevated our senses as we turned and saw a VC hidden across from the bunker. A recording of radio transmissions from CSC played in the background and, like so many nights so many years ago, we didn't immediately see the K-9 handler and his dog on alert right behind us, emerging from the night and fully focused on the VC. Static displays honor the Safeside legacy, our training, our heroes and those we lost. Captured weapons provide a quiet but hard reminder that they were carried by enemies who not only wanted to kill us, but were committed to destroy the base, the aircraft and the personnel we protected.

The next time you have the opportunity to visit the museum, take the time to visit our bunker. We owe a huge thanks to VSPA Historian, Kelly Bateman, who worked with the new curator, Terri Bedore, the museum staff and the Museum Foundation. VSPA Life Members Jerry Nelson and Pete Villarreal assisted with the Safeside section. Kelly will continue to work with the museum staff as they remodel the K-9 displays. And, if you run into retired Col. Mel Grover of the 377th SPS, please give him a hearty "well done!" for building the bunker.



Photos by VSPA Member Ken Neal

Remarks by Col Gregory Reese

Lackland AFB - San Antonio, TX

Tet Offensive 44th Anniversary

Commemorative Event—January 31, 2012

Lt Gen Johnston, Brig Gen Coleman, Col Axelbank, Col Denisio, Col Grover, Col Tucker, Senior Master Sergeant Piazza, distinguished guests, Vietnam Veterans, and most importantly, the students and cadre of the Security Forces Academy and Military Working Dog Center, thank you for attending today's commemoration.

There is very little I can say to follow the reflections of Col Denisio and Senior Piazza. I would only ask for my fellow Defenders still on active duty or those getting ready to don the shield and beret to consider the following:



Col Gregory Reese

Photo by VPSA Member Ken Neal

These men all say that their sacrifices pale in comparison to those who went before them for the cause of freedom in Korea and World War II.

These men all faced adversities such as insufficient equipment, not enough time for training, and a lack of unity of defense throughout the base security zone.

These men all faced an enemy who blended into the populace and only attacked when the time and place was to the enemy's advantage.

These men, all embody the "Legacy of Valor" we refer to in our Airman's Creed. These men are our history and our heritage; they are the example we should aspire to.

We can never thank them enough for their courage, their dedication, their sacrifice.

So why commemorate the Tet Offensive? While it is a convenient time to thank Vietnam Veterans, it is also an opportunity to remind our future Defenders of the challenges they may face defending America today.

We planned this ceremony to remind our future Security Forces members that

- ◆ They will face adversity.
- ◆ They will not have enough equipment.
- ◆ They will not have enough training.
- ◆ They will not have enough personnel for the task and may not have unity of command or effort for defending the base security zone.

- ◆ They will face enemies who are insidious, tenacious, and radically committed to their cause.

We all could, like the Vietnam Veterans with us today, face a pitched battle in size and ferocity that we never expected to fight. Will we be ready? There is an example, a tradition of honor and a legacy of Valor. It is written on the wall to our west, it is written in the souls of the veterans whose sacrifices we commemorate today.

We will be tenacious.

We will be resourceful.

We will take every opportunity to train, to rehearse and to prepare for the day the enemy picks to attack us.

We will be warriors with our every breath.

We will defend our country, our airbase, our fellow airman, and our fellow Defenders with our lives.

As you prepare to put on that beret these men earned that day, never forget their sacrifice, never forget those who laid down their lives, never forget their example. Every day you draw your weapon from the armory, assume your post like the lives of your fellow Defenders will require your last full measure,.

You are the future of Security Forces and our Air Force, never forget it. To those who have gone before us, who have fought our nation's battles, who gave us the right to proudly call ourselves, Americans, thank you. We can never repay your sacrifices, but rest well, knowing we will have assumed your post and will stand our watch with the same vigilance, the same intensity, the same honor, as you did, 44 years ago today.

Thank you.



VSPA Scholarship Fund

The VSPA has a scholarship fund established for members and their families for furthering their education beyond high school. Members, spouses, children, grandchildren, step children and grandchildren are eligible.

For applications/information please contact me via e-mail at jlz9107@earthlink or call me at 949-855-8901.

The cutoff date for submission is October 1, 2012.

VSPA member Jim Lebowitz



Editor's note: Many of you know Kim Bayes Bautista, Associate Member, aka "Queen Mother" and a great friend to the VSPA. In addition to assisting with our reunions for many years, Kim is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Ft. Hood, TX. She has graciously agreed to write a repeating column for GUARDMOUNT and we gratefully present her seventh article below.



FROM THE FIELD

of behavioral health

Kim Bayes-Bautista, MSSW, LCSW

Honorary Member VSPA



Permanent Solution to a Temporary Problem

In my clinical practice I have to ask my soldiers at every visit if they are having thoughts or plans of suicide. I often get answers like "off and on"... "I don't want to be here." "The world would be better off without me." "I can't stand it anymore." "Yes, I have a gun and I will put it in my mouth and blow my ***** brains out." I feel fear for them and wonder how they have come to be in such a dark place. As I explore their pain, I hear that they are tired of being revisited by traumatic memories, tired of the complexities and chaos of everyday life, tired of nightmares and lack of sleep, and perhaps are experiencing drug and/or alcohol addiction. They entertain the idea of dying way too much.

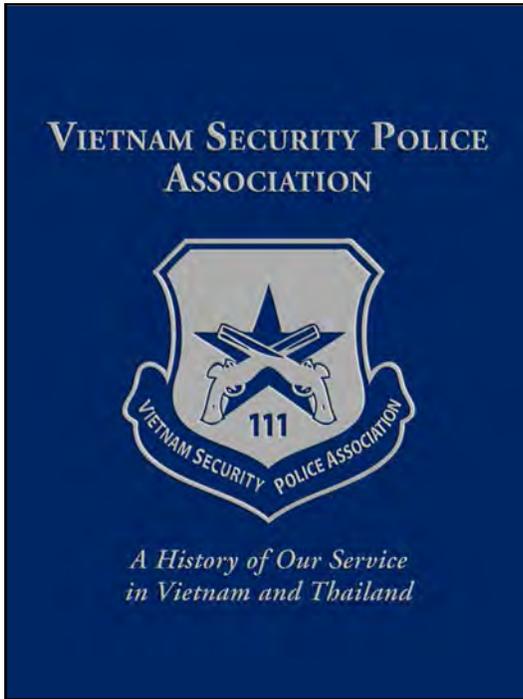
People who have made the choice to kill themselves have lost their way. The support of friends, family, spiritual leaders and mental health providers is critical. Most people who attempt suicide and are unsuccessful, wish they had never done it. There are some, however, who are intent on trying again and succeeding. If we see someone who appears depressed or is engaging in self destructive behaviors we should ask, "Do you want to kill yourself?" If the answer is yes, encourage them to seek help.

Signs of suicidal behavior:

- ◆ Someone threatening to hurt or kill him/herself, or talking or wanting to hurt or kill him/herself
- ◆ Someone looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- ◆ Someone talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
- ◆ Giving away personal items
- ◆ Engaging in dangerous behaviors wherein they deliberately try and have someone else kill them.

The local emergency room or crisis center is equipped to deal with suicidal behavior. Below are also two resources. Care enough to call. We must take care of our own.

NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE 800-273-8255 (TALK)
VET CRISIS LINE 1-877-VET2VET (838-2838)



2ND PRINTING - BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE!

THE VSPA HISTORY BOOK UPDATE

By Steve Gattis

SGattis-LM49@vspa.com

“THE BOOK” is back in print! Of the 200 books that were ordered, 105 have been reserved or mailed. If you would like to purchase one of the remaining 95 books, the cost will be the same as the original price of \$54 plus \$6.95 for shipping. Please send an email to me stating that you would like to reserve a book. Then, make a check payable to the Vietnam Security Police Association for \$54 per book, plus \$6.95 shipping. If you order more than one book, the shipping cost for each additional book is reduced to \$3 rather than \$6.95. This is the original book price and shipping rate charged by Turner Publishing.

Please mail the check (**payable to the VSPA**) to the following address:

Steve Gattis
P.O. Box 1889
Glen Rose, Texas 76043

I send my heartfelt thanks to all of you who participated in the book or ordered a book. We own a wonderful piece of our history. And now, thanks to Paul Shave, Life Member #666 who volunteered for Vietnam with me while we were serving together at Kunsan AB, Korea, our history has also been preserved at the research library of the New Mexico Veterans Memorial near Kirtland AFB. As shown in the photos below, Paul purchased our book and personally donated it to their research library.



VSPA LM #666 Paul Shave, presents a copy of our book to the New Mexico Veterans Research Library at his own expense.

NOTE: All Officers and Staff are unpaid VSPA members who volunteer to serve their brothers in the association. Officers were elected in 2010 for a two-year term. Staff members were appointed to assist and advise the officers of the association as needed.

Board of Directors

PRESIDENT: Phil Carroll; Takhli, Nakhon Phanom 70-71; Tina X768, Charlie 2M45;
k9nightfighter@msn.com; 503-353-0443
VICE PRESIDENT: Greg Cain; Binh Thuy 67-68; gjcain@roadrunner.com; 716-771-1157
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT: Bill Marshall; Phu Cat 68-69; billmarshallvspalm85@gmail.com;
949-388-5664
SECRETARY: Dennis Evans; Binh Thuy AB, 69-70; denniseevans@aol.com; 661-803-1812
TREASURER: Richard Garcia; Phan Rang 69-70; cal400@optonline.net; 516-799-9205
HISTORIAN: Kelly Bateman; Ubon K-9 70-71; Baron 279M; texask-9@swbell.net;
512-847-9805
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Don Poss; Da Nang 65-66; Blackie 129X
DonPossLM37@vspa.com 951-325-7244
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: Newell Swartz; Phan Rang, Phu Cat 66-67;
roadog2007@yahoo.com; 602-437-2677
PRESIDENT EMERITUS: Steve Gattis; Cam Ranh Bay 68-69; SGattis-LM49@vspa.com;
254-898-2647

Appointed Staff

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN Bill Marshall; Phu Cat 68-69;
billmarshallvspalm85@gmail.com; 949-388-5664
MEMBERSHIP ASSISTANT Janet Matthews-Parker; Sisterhood VP; sparkplugvspa@gmail.com;
205-663-7662
K-9 KENNEL MASTER Jim Stastny; Korat 70-71; Boots 645M; jimstastny@verizon.net;
301-482-2659
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS Keith Young; Binh Thuy, Phu Cat 70-71; kcy9540@aol.com;
716-549-0715
SERVICE OFFICER Bud Owens; Binh Thuy 66-67; betbudowe@comcast.net;
603-778-1990
BX STORE MANAGERS: Van and Joyce Digby, assisted by daughter and son-in-law Kim & Brent
Budzinski—MAIL ORDER available by phone 989-667-9117 or email: jad403@sbcglobal.net
CHAPLAIN Steve Janke; Cam Ranh Bay 69-70; Kobuc X448; Jank953208@aol.com;
201-507-9038
CHAPLAIN Jim Stastny; Korat 70-71; Boots 645M; jimstastny@verizon.net; 301-482-2659
CHAPLAIN Bill Cooley; Cam Ranh Bay 71-72; Mingo 30A0 BCAJ@gvtc.com;
830-899-7542
CHAPLAIN Jeff Kerkhoff; Tan Son Nhut 72-73; (no email); 626-338-6846
"GUARDMOUNT" EDITOR Erlyce Pekas; erlyce@msn.com; 602-574-7089; associate member
SAFESIDE LIASON Dave Pierson; Binh Thuy 69-70; swampur@att.net;
775-883-7647
PARALEGAL Paul Sigler; Cam Ranh Bay 65-66; parazig169@att.net; 918-336-3595
WEB ADMINISTRATOR Larry Poss; Associate Member; larry@larryposs.com;
702-501-7677
WEB MASTER Don Poss; Da Nang 65-66; Blackie 129X; DonPossLM37@vspa.com;
951-325-7244
K-9 WEB MASTER Monty Moore; Da Nang, Phu Cat 68-70; Kobuc X448, Giant A905, Blackie 129X
k-9@vspa.com; 512-639-0005
WEB QRTroubleShooter Gary Jones; Udorn, Phan Rang, Da Nang, Tan Son Nhut; 1965; 68-69;
71-72; gjones003@sc.rr.com; 843-851-7427
WEB ADOBE PDF TECH Greg Dunlap; Da Nang 68-69; Blackie 129X; blackey@sonic.net;
707.576.9683

BB FLIGHT LEADER Bill Marshall; Phu Cat 68-69; billmarshallvspalm85@gmail.com; 949-388-5664

PHOTOGRAPHER Tony Morris; Cam Ranh Bay 69-70; htmorris@gmail.com; 219-322-4418

PHOTOGRAPHER Steve Hall; Binh Thuy 68-69; hallstudio@att.net; 714-634-1132

PHOTOGRAPHER Lou Reda; Phan Rang 68-69; loureda202@gmail.com; 419-668-7591

VSPA SCHOLARSHIP Jim "Buddah" Lebowitz; Bien Hoa 66-68; jlz9107@earthlink.net

REUNION HOSPITALITY Sheila Gervase-Cain; Sisterhood P; smgervase@yahoo.com; 716-771-1157

BINH THUY LIAISON Lew Goldberg; Binh Thuy 68-69; ojdiddoit@yahoo.com; 417-877-7888

CAM RANH BAY LIAISON Trent Nentrup; Cam Ranh Bay 68-69; trent.nentrup@gmail.com; 812-341-2235

PHU CAT LIAISON Ron Arthur; Phu Cat 67-68; cobranam68@aol.com; 660-678-3501

PLEIKU LIAISON Pat Dunne (Hawk); Pleiku 1968; hawk51044@aol.com; 954-923-9001

TAN SON NHUT LIAISON Charles Penley; Tan Son Nhut 67-69; Rebel A531

cpenley@chartertn.net; 423-245-6863

UBON LIAISON Jim Watson; Ubon 68-69; Fritz X704; jimwatk9@ca.rr.com; 626-806-8463

NKP LIAISON George Conklin; NKP 1970-71; K-9 Ango 0K31; nkpk970@gmail.com

406-781-2269;

Sisterhood

PRESIDENT Sheila Gervase-Cain; smgervase@yahoo.com; 716-771-1157

VICE PRESIDENT Janet Matthews-Parker; sparkplugvspa@gmail.com; 205-663-7662

SECRETARY Erlyce Pekas; erlyce@msn.com; 602-574-7089

CHAPLAIN Roberta Smith; lizianthus1@yahoo.com; 614-879-6835

CORRESPONDENCE SEC. Pam Talbot; lilacroller1@comcast.net; 815-935-2139

Seems Like Yesterday: Tuesday, 17 Nov '70

By Robert "Deke" DeCubellis—A1C, Bien Hoa 70 (Col, USAF Ret)—VSPA Life Member #347

Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of South Vietnam (RVN) in the summer and fall 1970 was in transition. The monsoons were winding down, President Nixon's Vietnamization Program was being implemented, and the Paris Peace Talks with North Vietnam had begun again. With all the anti-war turmoil back in "The World", the #1 objective to keep yourself and your buddies alive and ride your freedom bird home and intact.

As a two-striper, I worked Tiger Flight and lost my "new guy" status on 11 June at 0653L---our 3-man SAT was coming off duty and we got to bail out for cover as rockets impacted nearby. It was *only* two but they sure got my attention! Following a "summer of soggy" in the poorly draining bunkers, LPs, OPs and hump posts of Baker and Able areas, I completed security controller training in Defense Control, (aka CSC).



Author seated at the 2nd Controller's console at left of the Senior Controller. The Post Priority Charts on night this picture was taken listed 122 USAF cops on duty plus unknown number of VNAF.

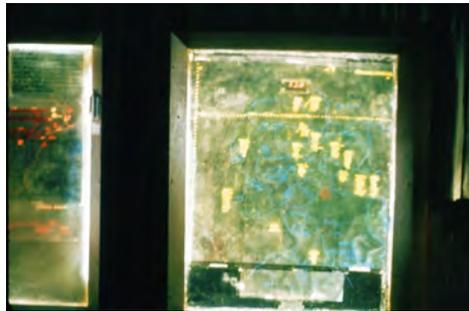
Sgt Bob Katra, center console with yellow box "Hot Button" ALWAYS within arm's reach. At right is plot board for triangulating back azimuth calls for possible launch sites. Near phone are QR Checklists, radios and cursed multi-carboned desk blotter in a manual typewriter. *WHAT COMPUTER?!*



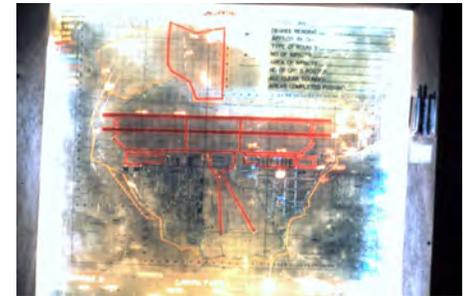
On the evening of November 16th, 1970, Katra, Gonzales our FDC cop, and I drew weapons and hustled over to Defense Control to meet with our VNAF counterpart, Sgt Ngoc, nicknamed “Knock”, who manned their radios. Controllers reported early for shift change overlap, pass-ons and a feel for what was happening since the last tour of duty. In my recollection, almost any OSI report sourced as “observed by local woodcutters” was usually: 1) bogus; 2) horribly inflated; 3) uselessly outdated; or 4) all of the above. Seems “local woodcutters” rarely volunteered any good info without being paid and the better their story, the better they got paid! But that night’s intell gave us cause for concern. It included a solid and detailed OSI B-2 report on an NVA outfit seen in our area known as K-2 Company of the Dong Nai Regiment. We took this one to heart.

Following shift change, commo checks, checklist runs and admin work, we awaited arrival of the flight chief after post out. The “Blue 2-4” guy radioed in, already making his rounds to ensure our perimeter light-all units were fueled and humming. Business as usual. No high-speed Google-Earth Power-Point depictions in those days! We had low-tech back lighted intell status boards marked up with colored grease pencils to plot reported enemy activity in our area of operations and to display the actual base and security posts with key assets for use by the Battle Staff if we were “hit”.

RIGHT: This was a regional map with Bien Hoa AB in red near map center. In this early Nov '70 photo, base is ringed by bright yellow grease-penciled marks depicting enemy activity, most within 7-15 clicks north beyond Song Dong Nai River .



RIGHT: Bien Hoa AB with runways and Able Area Bomb Dump depicted in red. Defense Control is at the 5 o'clock position SE section of the base. Attack was launched from roughly 5-7 clicks beyond Able Area (11 o'clock from the N/NW).



Looking that intell board over several times as the evening wore on, Kat and I kept reflecting on the “K-2 crew” report. From the sighting date and grid coordinates, they *could* be in launch position to our north/northwest *if* it was a righteous report. The report claimed they were humping a good load of rockets and other weapons. We’d had no rocket attacks since June ---Bien Hoa was long overdue.

The Bullseye’s tower sentry’s primary job was to spot rocket launches, sound “incoming”, and get an accurate azimuth and estimated range reading. Keeping alert on rocket watch was always a challenge. It was easy to get squinty eyed looking for things that may never be there. Perimeter light, vehicles, and brilliant flares being popped... all of it played hell with your night vision and focusing talents. You’d hate to look away or rub your eyes for a second since it could mean a missed launch. We had Bull’s-eye 4 and 7, two towers on Able Area’s Hawk Hill on the north side of the base ammo dump. We spoke several times on the “Threads Control” Fox Mike “freq” as the night wore on. For some reason, I kept cueing Bob Ludwig in BE-7 to keep a close eye out to their north/northwest beyond the river. If it was to be tonight, that’s the direction it would come from. As it turned out, I think Bob got the first “10-88” that night.

Charlie Flight controllers had “GI duties” too. At 0500, we split cleanup tasks, never leaving the alarm seat vacant. I was running the floor buffer when suddenly Katra and I locked eyes with a surge of energy I will *never* forget. Don’t tell me how we knew it was coming. But come it did! Like we’d both been hit with lightning, I power-spun the buffer out of the way just as he whirled to mash the alert siren button as the radios came alive with multiple “10-88”calls. As the sirens wailed, we heard the freight-train roar of incoming rockets and thunder of the first of many impacts.

It was controlled chaos but we were trained and ready--working radio calls, capturing launch site azimuth reports, injury and damage reports, coordinating fire and medic responses, and getting the up-channel Safewind report out to 7th AF and other bases in RVN. Knowing we worked under a roof made of flimsy metal joists, some fiber board insulation and corrugated sheet metal meant zero protection from a direct hit. Fortunately for us, although we were bracketed by the incoming, it all went long or short of us. Given the time of day, we were pretty sure it was *only* a stand-off attack, but coming nearly at shift change, we had plenty of cops to deal with any penetration attempt if it came.

Once we briefed our CC, Major Ed Johnson (Col, USAF-Ret), and other leadership, the day shift controllers checked in to relieve us. We were still pretty wired up after what turned out to be the biggest rocket attack in country for a while, and certainly the biggest event of our respective tours to date. We walked over to check out damage in our squadron area and there were medics still tending to an A Flight cop who’d taken some rocket shrapnel in his lower leg and ankle. It turned out to be his ticket home. One guy’s wall locker securing his reel to reel tape deck took a direct hit from a rocket base plate--- better his music than his body. Several bunks in that area were peppered with rocket frags but to my knowledge, no other cops had been hit beside the guy with the leg wound.

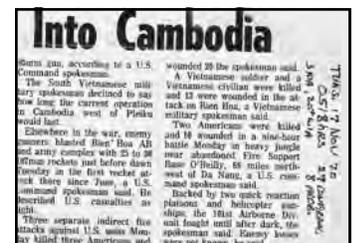


Pictures of damaged hooch. Round blew through the roof, Glanced off the side, detonated & fraged the whole wall



This photo is one of the damaged SP cubes that were blown in & peppered with shrapnel.

Right: Pacific Stars & Stripes clip days later.



Another hooch close by was not as lucky. A 107mm rocket killed three guys standing on the stairway reportedly watching the attack instead of taking shelter. Rumor was they were supposed to be catching their Freedom Bird that day. It was a reality check for us to see the blood-stains and damage after the medics had removed the victims. A sad lesson for all of us that taking cover was "Job 1" when that siren went off.

Official stats that day were 28 confirmed hits of stand off fire with many unconfirmed. We took 3 KIA and 28 WIA with no loss of aircraft. Host nation losses were 2 KIA and 11 WIA. We also logged a lesson not to take lightly any woodcutter reports about the K-2 Company of the Dong Nai Regiment.

Stand off attacks were usually Chicom 107MM or Russian 122 MM rockets with an occasional mortar or two lobbed our way. VC would come from the NW into our AOR along the Song Dong Nai River and launch rockets at us using off bamboo X-frame supports, wired with batteries and alarm clock timers in a daisy chain. Then they'd "di-di mau" and be long gone at launch time. Rockets launch with a very distinctive tail of flame and our tower guys trained to watch for them. The sooner they called "10-88", the faster the siren alerts one and all to take cover. Quickly triangulating the launch site also gave us a better chance of catching bad guys with counterfires.

The key job in Defense Control was the center "Hot Seat" on the console where THE BUTTON was mounted on the wall. It was NEVER left unmanned. If any radio called "10-88" or INCOMING or anything close to it, the controller's job was to mash that button which fired off the base sirens to get everybody under cover. The rest of that front wall had priority post charts, base and area maps with plotting tools. The 2nd controller would copy contact azimuth calls from posts spotting rocket launches or activity so we could call for Nighthawk helicopter gunships, arty or mortar fire as appropriate. Last of all, we'd tally up damage reports as the Crater Teams did their work while off-duty shifts reported in for assignments.

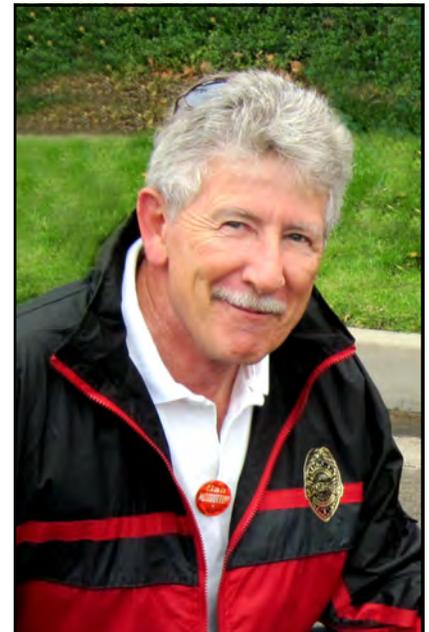
The Cambodian incursion was over and we'd begun getting more frequent but sketchy intell reports of activity across the river to our north. Nearly every Guardmount, we'd hear this song: "... small group of VC observed by local woodcutters approx 15-16 clicks (kilometers) NW Bien Hoa, carrying many 107 MM rockets, 60 MM mortar tubes, backpack rounds, base plates, and many small arms..... last observed heading SE "x" days ago. This is an OSI C-3 report...."

We had each tower plotted on our base map board down to an 8 digit grid. Keeping the guys alert on rocket watch in Bulls Eye towers was always a challenge. It was easy to get squinty eyed looking for things that may never be there. Extraneous light from vehicles, light-alls, or brilliant flares being popped... all of it played hell with your night vision and focusing talents. And the minute you look away or rub your eyes could mean a missed launch.

I finished my year unscathed in spite of several more rocket attacks. but never got to hit punch the Hot Button my entire tour. Bruce Nelson and I came back together on Day 365 and returned to Hamilton AFB in CA where we finished our four years and separated. He went on to a career as a teacher in LA. Ludwig and I stayed in touch for a while but we've lost contact. Am guessing he's still in Connecticut rooting for his Yankees. I'm still trying to track down the Kat man in PA. I later joined the Air Force Reserve and retired in 2006 after a full career as an Air Reserve Technician. Col Ed Johnson supported my commissioning package, and he and I have remained good friends to this day. My thanks to him, Bruce, and Larry Greco for memory ticklers. I have a few more tales to tell and will crank 'em out before they get lost in the "fog of retirement". But for those who lived it, November 17th is one day we'll never forget.



DeCubellis and Bullseye 4 sentry Bob Ludwig consuming some luke-warm PBRs after post relief on Christmas morning '70. Barracks where the Nov 17th USAF KIAs occurred are behind them.



Robert "Deke" DeCubellis today

Erlyce Pekas, Guardmount Editor
Associate Member
Vietnam Security Police Association
P.O. Box 22035
Phoenix, AZ 85028



Welcome Spring!



USAF Security Police Vietnam Veterans—Welcome Home!

If you served in the USAF Air Police, Security Police, K-9, Safeside, or as a Security Police Augmentee in Vietnam or Thailand between 1958 and 1975, there's a great brotherhood looking for you. With more than 1,300 currently active members, the Vietnam Security Police Association is where you belong.

VSPA was formed for many reasons; to reunite friends, to preserve the memories of our fallen brothers and the history of our service in Vietnam and Thailand, and to ensure that the hard lessons learned in that war would not be forgotten. Lessons of life and death, forged in war, tempered in battle, that when remembered provide inspiration to Airmen who are yet to taste combat defending the fortress, and pride for those of us who have fought and bled together.

If you're qualified and interested in membership, read more about the VSPA and how to join at our website: www.vspa.com. WELCOME HOME TO VSPA!

VSPA'S NEXT REUNION—ELGIN AFB AND HURLBURT FIELD IN FLORIDA, FALL 2012
(See page 13 for early Hotel Registration—Reunion dates Oct. 3-7, 2012.)